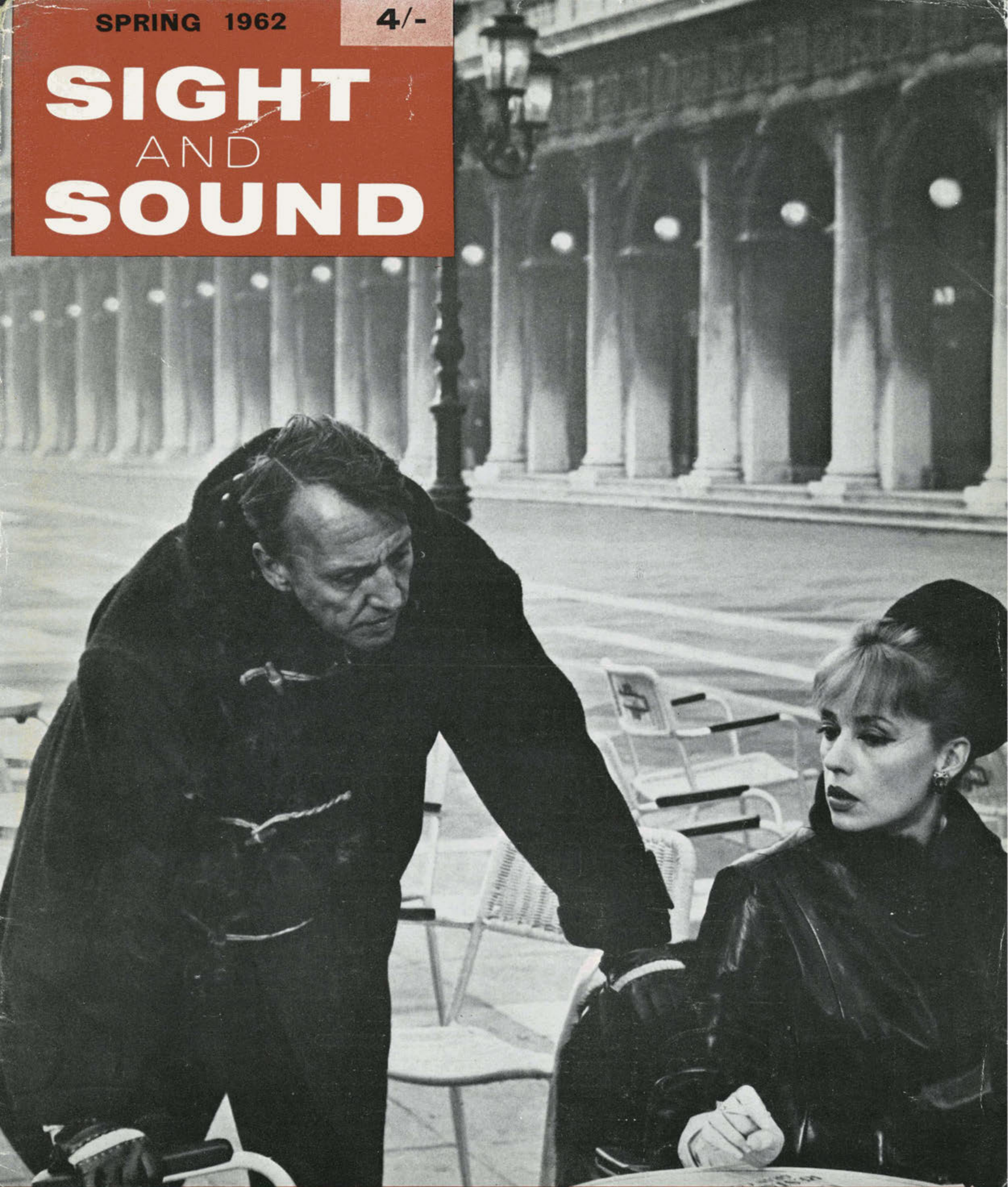


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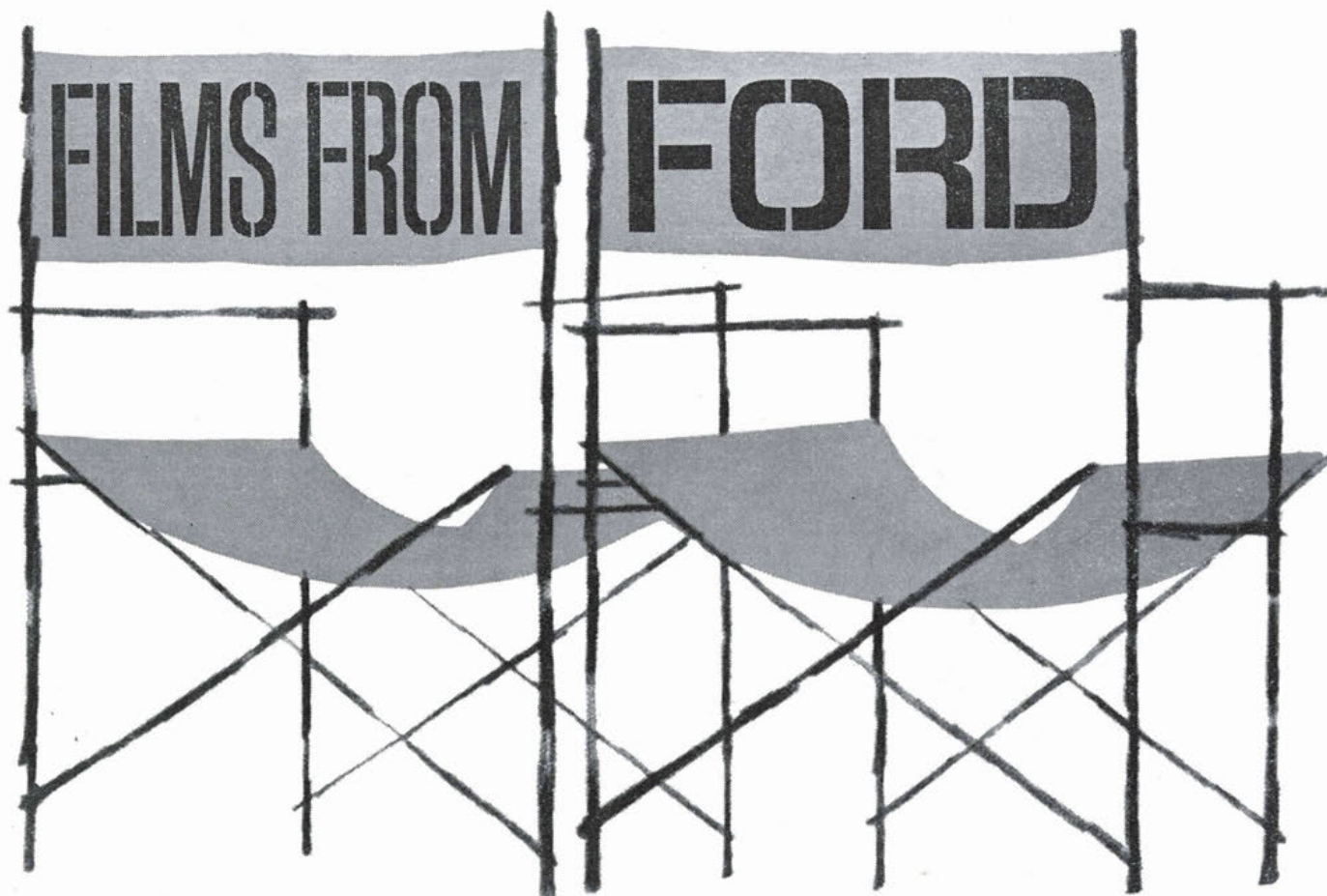
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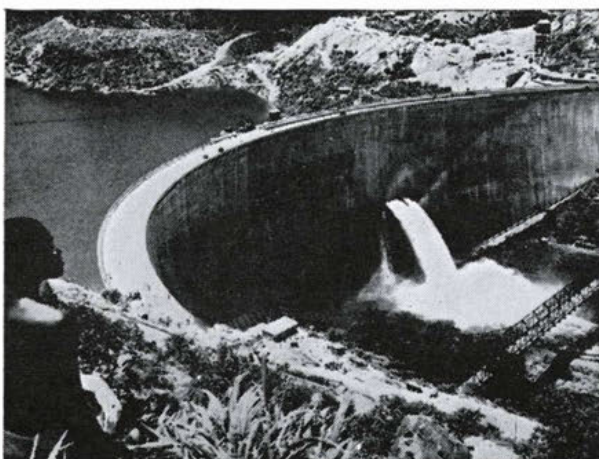
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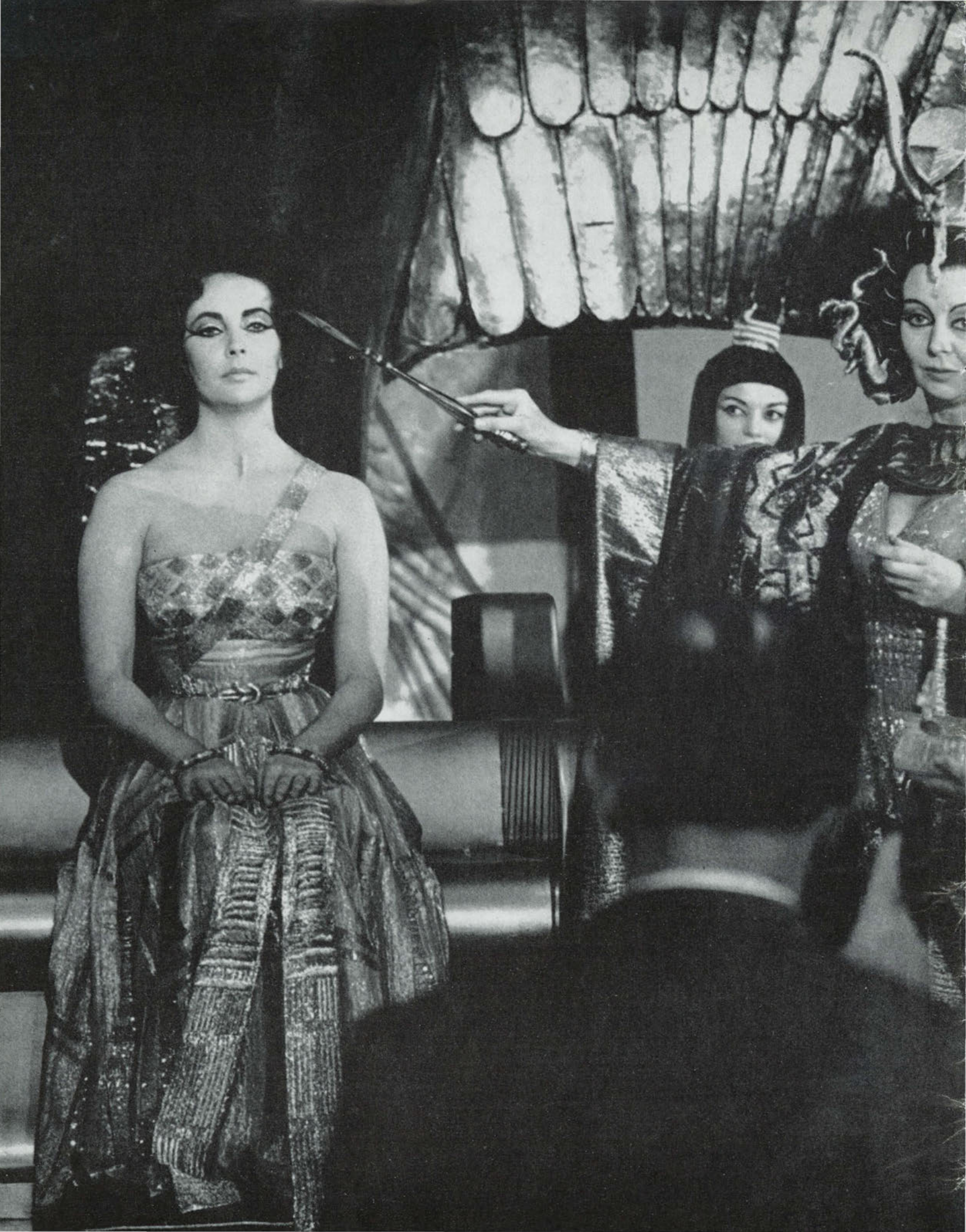
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SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy; signed articles represent the views of their authors, and not necessarily those of the Editorial Board.

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THE FRONT PAGE

THREE YEARS OR SO AGO, films like *Room at the Top* and *Look Back in Anger* had critics talking about a breakthrough in British cinema. A breakthrough to what? Other than a responsible look at a new kind of subject, it was never all that clear; but we could feel that the British cinema was poised on the edge of something. In 1962, it is still hovering on the edge. The public has responded to the new subjects, to Joe Lampton and Arthur Seaton and the girl in *A Taste of Honey*; the pioneers, Woodfall, have an ambitious production programme on hand; and if a film's theme suggests that it could be another *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* commercially, it stands a tolerable chance of finding backers.

But perhaps we know now, as we didn't then, what a breakthrough might mean: we've had films as varied as *La Notte* and *Il Posto*, *Lola* and *A Bout de Souffle* to teach us. There is not a glimmer of a chance, on the existing evidence, that any of these films could have come out of Britain, either from our studios or from young film-makers working independently. In totally different ways, they illustrate attitudes to the cinema—from the most serious to the most impudent—that have not yet strayed across the Channel, or certainly have not yet declared themselves.

The basic difference seems to be whether one thinks of cinema as a language (the phrase beloved of the French) or as a way of interpreting another language. Between the conception and the creation, in British studios, falls the shadow of the word. Almost everything that is good or serious or adventurous in our cinema originates in a novel or a play; and although there is nothing wrong with adaptations as such, and no guarantee that original scenarios make better films, there is something wrong with an industry which thinks so consistently in terms of adaptation. On top of that, our directors leave us feeling that they lean too heavily on the script itself: that they move from words on paper to images on film. There is not that sense, which Antonioni or Truffaut or Godard or a dozen others can give you, that cinema is language, just as words are language, and that they are independent of each other.

Transferring a script to the screen and "inventing a bit of film" (Antonioni's words) are not the same thing. The literary effect that can be made to work in screen terms, and the effect that belongs only to the cinema (the criss-cross patterns of movement in the party sequence of *La Notte*, for instance) are different in themselves. And this is where a real breakthrough comes. Is it our literary tradition which damps down British cinema? Or the long years it took in this country for the cinema to achieve anything approaching equivalent status with the other arts? Or the attitude of the critics, themselves too closely attached to literature? Or a national state of mind? A bit of everything, probably; and certainly, with the problems that surround them, British directors are hardly to be blamed for going about things the way they have, taking their direction from the theatre and the novel.

If anyone asks for a new attitude to cinema, it's at once

assumed that he means some form of desperately uncommercial experiment, having no relation to the sort of films people actually pay to see. But *A Bout de Souffle* was a smash hit in France; *Il Posto* a very respectable success in Italy; *La Notte* a more than reasonable commercial proposition. The difference between a film which is cinematic all the way, because that is how the director's mind works, and the one which suddenly remembers to be 'cinema' for a few minutes, with a bit of bravura technique, is not going to be apparent to the public at large. A symptom: a film like *Lola* or *Il Posto* seems entirely at home in the place where it's made; a British film, when it gets outside the studio, becomes location-conscious. You can almost sense the presence of the mobile canteen with the extras' lunch, parked just out of camera range. Yet the difference between a film which seems to grow out of a place and one which imposes itself on a location, is not likely to be reflected in the box-office takings.

"The most conformist cinema in the world," Sergei Youtkevich said of us in a recent interview. Critics know that this is a view widely held abroad, in the circles in which ideas and innovations are discussed. And the moment of possible entry into the Common Market is not one to be dragging our feet. Accepting that Britain cannot, except in co-productions, expect to challenge the American cinema in terms of spectacle (and to do this today means being prepared to invest £2 million or so in a production), then there is the challenge of French and Italian 'quality' product to be met.

How do we achieve this next breakthrough? Changes in thinking take time, and Antonioni and Truffauts are not made overnight. There are two positive steps which could be taken, however, which would be relatively inexpensive and which would show that we meant business. For years there has been talk of a national film school, financed publicly or by the industry: we could bring it into existence. And we could adapt the continental method of letting some of the money available for production take the form of awards to film-makers prepared to take commercial risks. If we want a creative climate which encourages talent to expand freely, and if we also realise that a few film-makers cannot be expected to do the whole thing for us, these are practical ways of stimulating new attitudes. They have worked elsewhere: they should at the very least be seriously considered here. To get the debate moving, we publish articles on both subjects, discussing more fully some of the issues involved. We hope that they will be followed up.

* * *

With this issue, very regretfully, we raise the price of SIGHT AND SOUND from 3/6 to 4/- in Britain and from 75c to 85c in America. The reason, of course, is the rising cost of everything involved in magazine production. The new subscription rate for this country will be 18/- a year; this new rate comes into effect on May 14th, so that readers who subscribe, or renew subscriptions, before that date will still receive the benefit of the old rate. Readers may also be interested in details of the reduced rates for two or three year subscriptions. These can be obtained from this office, or from our American agents, the Eastern News Distributors—addresses at the foot of the contents page.

Opposite: Joseph L. Mankiewicz watches a rehearsal of the coronation scene in his "*Cleopatra*". Elizabeth Taylor as *Cleopatra*; Pamela Brown with head-dress.

IS THERE A



CURE

FOR

by Pauline Kael

FILM

CRITICISM?

or: Some unhappy
thoughts on
SIEGFRIED KRACAUER'S
Nature of Film:
The Redemption of
Physical Reality



SIEGFRIED KRACAUER IS THE sort of man who can't say "It's a lovely day" without first establishing that it is day, that the term "day" is meaningless without the dialectical concept of "night", that both these terms have no meaning unless there is a world in which day and night alternate, and so forth. By the time he has established an epistemological system to support his right to observe that it's a lovely day, our day has been spoiled. Kracauer doesn't mean to spoil movies for us. It's obvious that he really loves certain movies—and he does his best to justify this affection by bending and twisting his theory to include, or at least excuse, the movies he likes. This is made possible by our confusion about what the theory is.

It's always said of George Lukacs that his best stuff isn't in English; Kracauer's best stuff isn't in English either. Reading this book is slow going—and not because it's overwhelmingly deep. After 215 pages we get to this:

The time-honoured differentiation between form and content of artistic achievements affords a convenient starting-point for an analysis of story types. It is true that in any given case these two components of the work of art interpenetrate each other insolubly: each content includes form elements; each form is also content . . . But it is no less true that the concepts "form" and "content" have a basis in the properties of the artistic work itself. And the near-impossibility of neatly validating these concepts in the material is rather a point in their favour. With complex live entities the accuracy of definitions does not suffer from the fact that they retain a fringe of indistinct meanings. Quite the contrary, they must be elusive to achieve maximum precision—which implies that any attempt to remove their seeming vagueness for the sake of semantically irreproachable concepts is thoroughly devious.

Kracauer really cannot be accused of deviousness, and certainly his form and content are insoluble.

What do movies have to do with the "redemption" of "physical reality"? Our physical reality—what we experience about us—is what we can't redeem: if it's good, marvellous; if it isn't, we can weep or booze, or try to change it. Redemption, like sublimation, is a dear, sweet thought. And Kracauer's theory of film is a theory imposed on motion pictures: he's too much of a theoretician to develop a critical attitude or approach on the basis of what he likes (that would be too simple, too sensible). He presents a theory and then presents foundations and documentation (dogmentation, I almost said) to support it. The foundations are so laboriously laid that there is a tendency to accept certain assumptions, just to get things moving (after all, who wants to stay at the pre-film level forever?). But we may not feel too cheery about where things are heading when informed that "The following historical survey, then, is to provide the substantive conceptions on which the subsequent systematic considerations proper will depend." Doesn't exactly sound like an invitation to a party, does it? So many people who fled from Hitler, stripped of their possessions, seem to have come over carrying the worst of German pedantry in their heads.

*Nature of Film, The Redemption of Physical Reality** is expensively got out by Oxford University Press; it is, I suppose, Kracauer's major work since that Freudian-Marxian heavy entertainment *From Caligari to Hitler*, which is always referred to as a landmark in film scholarship—I suppose it is, in the sense that nobody else has done anything like it, *Gott sei dank!* The book carries such dust-jacket blurbs as Paul Rotha saying it is "The most important work to date in the English language on the theory and aesthetics of the Film.

It will make a deep impact in all places where the Cinema is regarded as an art." And Richard Griffith, the Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, says "Dr. Kracauer's work supersedes all previous aesthetic theories of the film."

There is, in any art, a tendency to turn one's own preferences into a monomaniac theory; in film criticism, the more confused and single-minded and dedicated (to untenable propositions) the theorist is, the more likely he is to be regarded as serious and important and "deep"—in contrast to relaxed men of good sense whose pluralistic approaches can be disregarded as not fundamental enough. During the years in which dialecticians were stating the thesis that "the art of the motion picture is montage" some very good movies were being made that had nothing whatever to do with "montage". (And those who were making a religion of the theory usually pointed out as examples the films Eisenstein made long after he'd abandoned—or been forced to abandon—"montage".) Related monomaniac schools developed—for example, SIGHT AND SOUND wants movies to be "firm" (a term one might think more applicable to a breast or a conviction).

Siegfried Kracauer is in the great, extremist tradition: he believes that the cinema is "animated by a desire to picture transient material life, life at its most ephemeral. Street crowds, involuntary gestures, and other fleeting impressions are its very meat . . . films are true to the medium to the extent that they penetrate the world before our eyes . . ." He says that this assumption "that films are true to the medium to the extent that they penetrate the world before our eyes . . ." is "the premise and axis" of his book. But what does it mean? Either it's a general sort of remark, a harmless tautology indicating that movies have something to do with the world—like presenting images of it; or he is trying to distinguish two classes of movies, those which presumably "penetrate the world before our eyes" and those which don't. But as we don't know what he means by this penetration, we accept his "premise and axis" as meaningless and move on. At almost every step in his reasoning we must do the same: would it be some terrible evidence of superficiality if we could penetrate what he's talking about?

II

For Kracauer, as for Hegel, all nature and all history are marching toward one culmination. "If film is a photographic medium, it must gravitate toward the expanses of outer reality—an open-ended, limitless world which bears little resemblance to the finite and ordered cosmos set by tragedy. Unlike this cosmos, where destiny defeats chance and all the light falls on human interaction, the world of film is a flow of random shots involving both humans and inanimate objects. . . . Once you start from the assumption that the camera retains major characteristics of photography, you will find it impossible to accept the widely sanctioned belief or claim that film is an art like traditional arts. Works of art consume the raw material from which they are drawn [I'd love an example! He sounds like a materialist running amok in a neighbour's field], whereas films as an outgrowth of camera work are bound to exhibit it. [Is it the medium or Kracauer standing on its head? The camera work is an outgrowth, if we must use such vegetable terms, of the conception of the film.] However purposefully directed, the motion picture camera would cease to be a camera if it did not record visible phenomena for their own sake. It fulfils itself in rendering 'the ripple of the leaves'."

I am puzzled to know how this ripple of the leaves theory could possibly help us to see into the art of the film: often the worst and most embarrassing part of a film is the accidental,

* English edition published by Dennis Dobson, 67s. 6d.

the uncontrolled, the amateurish failure which exhibits its unachieved intentions; and the finest moment may be a twitch of the actress's cheek achieved on the fiftieth take. There are accidents which look like art and there is art that looks accidental; but how can you build an *aesthetic* on accident—on the ripple of the leaves? How do you discriminate between the "accidental" that is banal or awkward or pointless and the "accidental" that is "cinema"—without referring to some *other* standards of excellence or even relevance? How can you say "accidents were the very soul of slapstick"? In comedy what looks accidental is generally the result of brilliant timing and deliberate anarchy and wild invention and endless practice.

What it comes down to in Kracauer is that film is Lumière's "nature caught in the act"—or neo-realism: the look of so many good movies during the period he was gestating this book becomes his definition of cinema itself.

What is this *nature* that is appealed to, a nature that *excludes* works that are staged, stylized, or even carefully wrought, if not simply another kind of *selection* from nature? Kracauer regards films dealing with the life of the poor or films using non-professionals as more "natural". Why? "Film," he tells us, "gravitates toward unstaged reality" and "the artificiality of stazy settings or compositions runs counter to the medium's declared preference for nature in the raw." How and when did the medium declare its preference, I wonder? The trouble with this kind of Hegelian prose is that the reader is at first amused by what seem to be harmless metaphors, and soon the metaphors are being used as if they were observable historical tendencies and aesthetic phenomena, and next the metaphor becomes a stick to castigate those who have other tastes, and other metaphors.

What are we to make of a statement like "Herschel not only predicted the basic features of the film camera but assigned to it a task which it has never since disowned: 'the vivid and lifelike reproduction and handing down to the latest posterity of any transaction in real life . . .'"? Well, I can't say that the film camera has ever disowned this task, any more than it ever claimed it. But I can certainly cite numerous people who have used it for recording life they *arranged* for the camera. Griffith and Eisenstein, for example—and just about everybody else who ever made a movie. When Kracauer says "Film . . . is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality and, hence, gravitates toward it," either he is including whatever is photographed in "reality"—an empty generalisation—or trying to claim that film "gravitates" toward "raw", "unstaged" reality, nature caught in the ripple of the leaves, and is once again indulging in the metaphorical sleight of mind by which he seeks to convince us that film "gravitates"—i.e. is drawn toward his idea of what movies should be. "Imagine a film which, in keeping with the basic properties, records interesting aspects of physical reality but does so in a technically imperfect manner; perhaps the lighting is awkward or the editing uninspired. Nevertheless such a film is more specifically a film than one which utilises brilliantly all the cinematic devices and tricks to produce a statement disregarding camera-reality." But what is camera-reality? What can it be but the area of reality he wants the camera to record? To put it simply and crudely, *Earth* is no more *real* than *Smiles of a Summer Night*. Kracauer is indulging in one of the oldest and most primitive types of thinking—he's like a religious zealot who thinks his life of prayer and fasting is more "real" than the worldly life of men in big cities, and that "nature" has somehow dictated his diet of nuts and berries.

"It is evident that the cinematic approach materialises in all films which follow the realistic tendency." Obviously—by his definition of cinema. Can tautology go much further? But then, once he has convinced himself that the art of the motion picture follows natural laws, he forgets that these natural "laws" are simply descriptive, and begins to talk about the "medium's recording obligations"—as if natural laws were prescriptions and commands, to be followed and obeyed.

And it is but a short next step for "nature" to decide what the *content* of films should or must be.

"The hunting ground of the motion picture camera is in principle unlimited [Don't trust this man. You'd better get a licence—he'd be the first to turn you in for poaching.]; it is the external world expanding in all directions. Yet there are certain subjects within that world which may be termed 'cinematic' because they seem to exert a peculiar attraction on the medium. It's as if the medium were predestined (and eager) to exhibit them." The "medium" has become such an animate creature that we might as well start looking around for ways to punish it when it misbehaves.

Starting from Kracauer's basis of looking for what cannot be done in any other medium, surely one could make an equally good case for the tricks and magic of Méliès. In what other medium would much of Cocteau's *Orphée* or Dreyer's *Vampyr* or Karel Zeman's *Invention of Destruction* be possible? Kracauer says Méliès "failed to transcend" the theatre "by incorporating genuinely cinematic subjects": we can translate this to mean that once you define "genuinely cinematic" as "the ripple of the leaves" or "nature caught in the act," the staged or deliberately magical becomes "uncinematic"—by definition. But why should we go along with him in playing this game of arbitrary definitions that simply lead us back to his starting point? It's a dull game: a nursery game.

"Mary Jane, be a good girl and eat your neo-realist bread pudding."

"I had that for supper last night. Tonight I want something choice, like some Jean Cocteau *nouvelle vague* ice cream."

"But that isn't good for you. Neo-realist bread pudding is much more nourishing. If you don't eat what's good for you, you won't grow up straight and healthy."

"If you like it so much, why don't you eat it yourself?"

"You need it more than I do."

"I think I'm going to throw up."

III

In his effort to distinguish "cinematic subjects," Kracauer draws some curious lines of demarcation. He finds, for example, that in film "inanimate objects stand out as protagonists and all but overshadow the rest of the cast." He cites "unruly Murphy beds," "the mad automobiles in silent comedy," etc. I would suggest that these inanimate objects are generally used on screen as props, in basically the same way they are used in vaudeville, in the theatre, or in the circus—and that there is nothing the matter with such use in a film or in any other medium; no line of demarcation is either possible or necessary. Chaplin's "Murphy bed" routine in *One A.M.* is either funny or not funny (I don't lose my mind over it); it probably could be done very similarly on stage. So what?

Other examples cited, the cruiser *Potemkin* and the oil derrick in *Louisiana Story*, are less feasible on stage, but how does that make them more cinematic than something which is easy to put in a theatre? Both are, incidentally, much less interesting objects on the screen than they are generally asserted to be: the exciting action in *Potemkin* has little reference to the cruiser itself (extras can run around on a stage, too), and I have never discovered any source of great cinematic excitement in *Louisiana Story*. "The fact," says Kracauer, "that big objects are as inaccessible to the stage as small ones suffices to range them among cinematic subjects." Who cares whether the objects on the screen are accessible or inaccessible to the stage, or, for that matter, to painting, or to the novel or poetry? Who started this divide and conquer game of aesthetics in which the different media are assigned their special domains like salesmen staking out their territories—you stick to the Midwest and I'll take Florida?

Film aestheticians are forever telling us that when they have discovered what the motion picture can do that other arts can't do, they have discovered the "essence", the "true nature" of motion picture art. It is like the old nonsense that man is what differentiates him from the other animals—which



"Astaire has the wit to make the dance appear casual . . ." A number from "The Barkleys of Broadway".

is usually said to be his soul or his mind or his ability to transmit information from one generation to another, etc. But man is also what he shares with the other animals. And if you try to reduce him to some supposed quality that he alone has, you get an absurdly distorted view of man. And the truth is, as we learn more about animals and about man, the less we are sure about what differentiates him from other animals, or if it's so very important. And what motion picture art shares with other arts is perhaps even more important than what it may, or may *not*, have exclusively.

Those who look for the differentiating, defining "essence" generally overlook the main body of film and stage material and techniques which are very much the same. Except for the physical presence of the actors in a theatre, there is almost no "difference" between stage and screen that isn't open to question; there is almost no effect possible in one that can't be simulated, and sometimes remarkably well achieved, in the other. Of course, there are effects in films that seem marvelously "filmic"—like the long tracking shots at the opening of Welles' *Touch of Evil*, or the ladies burning in Dreyer's *The Passion of Jeanne d'Arc* and *Day of Wrath*, or the good old car racing the train at the close of *Intolerance*; but it isn't beyond the range of possibility for a stage director to get very similar effects. Close-ups, long-shots, fast cutting are all possible on the stage, even though they require somewhat different techniques. And there is no more reason for a stage director to avoid fluid techniques that resemble movies (he *can't* avoid them in staging, say, Shakespeare or Büchner or *Peer Gynt* or *To Damascus*) than for a movie-maker to avoid keeping his camera inside one room—if a room is where his material belongs. We can take pleasure in the virtuoso use of visual images in Dovzhenko's *Arsenal* or Gance's *Napoleon*; we can

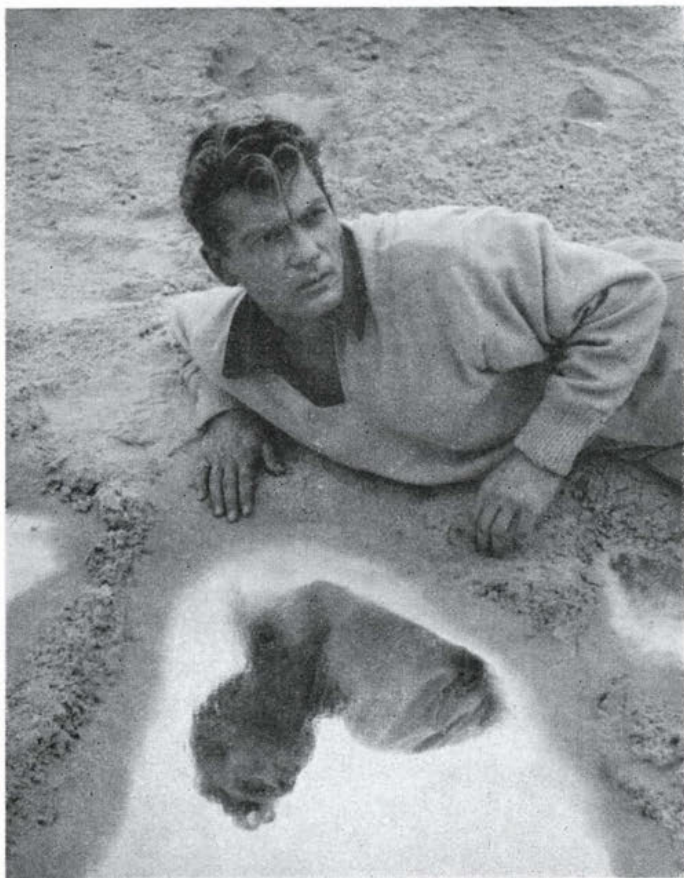
also take pleasure in a virtuoso performer like Keaton simply changing hats in *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*

IV

Perhaps the most lovable side of Kracauer is his desperate attempt to make musicals, which he obviously adores, fit his notion of cinema as nature in the raw. A man who likes Fred Astaire can't be all pedant. How touching he becomes when he tries to explain that it is Astaire's dancing "over tables and gravel paths into the everyday world . . . from the footlights to the heart of camera-reality" that makes him acceptable. He's like a man trying to sneak his dear—but naughty—friends into heaven.

As if our delight in the performance of a song or dance depended on the degree to which it grew out of the surrounding material—as if our pleasure had to be justified! This is a variant of the pedagogical Puritan notion that you mustn't enjoy a poem or a story unless it teaches you a lesson: you mustn't enjoy a movie unless it grows out of "nature". "... In making its songs appear an outgrowth of life's contingencies, the genre shows an affinity, however mediated, for the cinematic medium." Phew! Our pleasure in song and dance, as in motion picture itself, is in the ingenuity with which man *uses* the raw material of his existence—not in the raw material itself, or in a visible link with it.

Once again he falls back on his strange use of language. "Astaire's consummate dancing is meant to belong among the real-life events with which he toys in his musicals; and it is so organised that it imperceptibly emerges from, and disappears in, the flow of these happenings." The crucial word here is "meant". *Who* means it—some cosmic force? I think it may be almost disingenuous of Kracauer to pretend that the



"In what other medium would much of Cocteau's 'Orphée' be possible?"
Jean Marais as Orpheus.

Astaire-Rogers musicals represent the "flow of life". Isn't it enough that they represent the American film musical comedy tradition of rhythm and romance and high spirits, a tradition that has collapsed under the weight of "serious" ideas and "important" dance? He cannot accept even the early classic René Clair comedies for their wit and choreographic grace and movement, their poetic, imaginative stylization—but because "... it is the vicissitudes of life from which these ballets issue."

In other words, he attempts to build an aesthetic not on art (the formalised expression of experience) but on whether the raw material of art is still visible (or he can *pretend* it's visible) in the finished work—a very curious standard indeed. Why not then simply reject all art and go back to "nature"? His "aesthetics", carried out with any intellectual rigour, *reject art*. If you can only accept dancing in films by such bizarre claims as "... what could be more inseparable from that flow (of life) than 'natural' dancing?" some nebulous conception of "nature" has become your standard of art. It is, of course, on this same basis that reviewers of musicals often praise works like *On the Town* or *West Side Story*—and denigrate infinitely better musicals like *Singin' in the Rain* or *The Band Wagon*—though patently nothing is more embarrassing than the transparent efforts to make it appear that the musical numbers are "growing out" of the story. The dialogue becomes as flat and functional as the recitatives of opera. In a musical production like *The King and I*, the best sequence is the theatrical presentation of the Uncle Tom's Cabin ballet; the attempted integration of song into the plot, the contrived "natural" ways in which the characters break into little songs, are puerile and depressing. It is this clumsy effort to make things look "natural" instead of accepting the stylization of song and dance which helps to make so many musicals seem simpering and infantile.

But when Astaire goes into an exuberant routine that involves leaping over luggage and chairs, we are as aware of the pretence, the *convention* that this "grows out" of the plot situation, as we are aware of the conventions of any backstage musical, with the elaborate presentation of opening night and the understudy becoming the star. Surely nobody but "serious" critics takes one set of conventions for "life" and hence cinema art, and the other set of conventions for the dreadful error of "staginess". What matters is simply how good the numbers are (and how much talent or artistry have gone into making the conventions of musical film amusing and acceptable). A poorly choreographed dance over luggage and chairs would be no better because it seemed to "grow out" of the plot.

The lengths to which many theoreticians of the film will go to avoid accepting any form of convention or stylization is extraordinary. You may begin to suspect that they regard style as decadent; as if it were nature spoiled. For example, Kracauer's lengthy consideration of photography omits colour—which obviously involves types of control that would be a bit upsetting to this theory of "accidents" and "nature" and "unadulterated life". In his system the stylized use of colour would be like tampering with nature. And music? "The all-important thing is ... that musical accompaniment enlivens the pictures by evoking the more material aspects of reality." (But the more music does so, the worse it is as music. Even programme music like Respighi's *Pines* or *Fountains* does not evoke pines or fountains, but only images in the minds of people who would rather daydream than listen.)

And how is this for another effort to justify dancing by reference to the "candid" camera? "Records of dancing sometimes amount to an intrusion into the dancer's intimate privacy. His self-forgetting rapture may show in queer gestures and distorted facial expressions which are not intended to be watched ... However, the supreme virtue of the camera consists precisely in acting the voyeur." But the supreme virtue of an Astaire is precisely that you don't see the sweat and grimaces and months of nerve-wracking preparation: you see the *achieved* elegance. Astaire has the wit to make the dance appear casual and, as audience, we recognise that this nonchalant ease is the true grace note of his control. We are never for a minute taken in by the ruse that the dance is spontaneous; it is partly because we recognise the dance to be difficult and complex, that we enjoy the *convention* that it just happened.

V

Here is an example of Kracauer's critical method at work on the film *Hamlet*, with reference to Olivier's "To be or not to be," spoken from a tower, with the ocean underneath: "No sooner does the photographed ocean appear than the spectator experiences something like a shock. He cannot help recognising that this little scene is an outright intrusion; that it abruptly introduces an element incompatible with the rest of the imagery. How he then reacts to it depends upon his sensibilities. Those indifferent to the peculiarities of the medium, and therefore unquestioningly accepting the staged Elsinore, are likely to resent the unexpected emergence of crude nature as a letdown, while those more sensitive to the properties of film will in a flash realise the make-believe character of the castle's mythical splendour." If you have to be *sensitive* to realise that!

Of course the ocean is an intrusion: it intrudes on the stylized sets, it disturbs our acceptance and enjoyment of the Shakespearean conventions, and it adds an extra, visual layer of meaning to the soliloquy itself by introducing a redundancy—another means of suicide. But those "so sensitive to the properties of film" that they want to throw out the castle and have more ocean, are throwing out Shakespeare. I don't wish to demean the visual grandeur of the ocean, but can't we have some poetry and drama, too? Those who unquestioningly accept the staged Elsinore are not "indifferent to the peculiarities of the medium"; they are testifying to the

director's success in involving them in the world he has created on the screen. Yes, the ocean is a miserable mistake in *Hamlet*, but in Castellani's *Romeo and Juliet* the Friar's little outdoor scene gathering herbs is exquisite—a moment of absurd sweetness and innocence. Surely there are no hard and fast rules: it all depends on how it's done. In *Richard III*, Olivier succeeds with the soliloquies as neither he nor anyone else has done on film before; instead of treating them as outmoded or improper theatrical conventions and trying to fuse them with the dramatic action, he ignored film theories and used the soliloquy as a perfectly valid cinematic device. These moments when Richard puts the audience in his confidence are the most exciting in the film—intimate, audacious, brazen. What better demonstration could we have of the variety, the infinity of possibilities in movie-making?

VI

Kracauer finds that "the medium has always shown a predilection for . . . phenomena overwhelming consciousness" [If consciousness is overwhelmed, what becomes of phenomena?] . . . "elemental catastrophes, the atrocities of war, acts of violence and terror, sexual debauchery, and death." Is it the "medium" that shows this predilection? If so, it is not the only medium that does. Shakespeare dealt with such phenomena in poetic drama, Tolstoy in *War and Peace*, Beethoven in his symphonies, Goya in his *Disasters of War*, Picasso in *Guernica*. Was it the film "medium" that showed a predilection, or is it that artists like Griffith, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, Kurosawa wanted at certain times in their creative lives to deal with such phenomena, just as they might want at other times to express more personal emotions? The Shakespeare who wrote *Macbeth* also wrote the sonnets; is Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* less cinematic than *The Birth of a Nation* or *Intolerance*?

In no other art do theoreticians insist that the range of subject matter is determined by the medium. We can love *Middlemarch* without having to reject *The Wings of the Dove*. But Odessa-steeped film critics tell us that Eisenstein's "goal, a cinematic one, was the depiction of collective action, with the masses as the true hero"—and this battle hymn has become the international anthem of film criticism. In the Fall 1961 *New Politics*, Ernest Callenbach writes "a letter to a young film-maker" and says "Get thee to Cuba, and after that to Latin America elsewhere, and then Africa." Would the same advice be given to a young writer or painter? Why are movie-makers obliged to make history? In the dialectics of film criticism, the violent movements of men are as "natural" as the rippling of the leaves. But, but—suppose the young film-maker doesn't know Spanish, can't stand the sight of blood, was drawn to the film medium after seeing *L'Avventura*, and has prepared a fine, elliptical scenario on the uneventful life of Emily Dickinson? He'll probably make a terrible movie, but surely the first prerogative of an artist in any medium is to make a fool of himself. Callenbach, like so many film critics, regards Kracauer's position as basically sound. Writing of *Nature of Film*, he summarises the views, and says, "True. But what of the exact ways in which the potentially good materials are handled?" In other words, after you get to Cuba, where presumably you can find Kracauer's and Callenbach's kind of filmic "collective action" which is somehow raw nature, how should you proceed? Let's leave them to work it out, but it's worth noting that Kracauer's position is still dominant in much of film criticism.

Callenbach says the "general position must be retained. *Nature of Film* is indeed a landmark." You'd think there were no movies made between post-revolutionary Russia and post-war Italy and . . . Cuba. The application of this kind of theory in the past decades has resulted in such critical evaluations as Richard Griffith's selection of *A Nous La Liberté* as

René Clair's "masterpiece"—(over *Le Million*!) and his decision that *La Grande Illusion* was "fatally the projection of a literary argument. Nevertheless, the film was a determined attempt to comment upon events and if possible to influence them." That tells us what counts in making movies, doesn't it? You can mitigate your crimes against the "medium" if you attempt to influence history—in the direction the critic approves. The standard film histories still judge movies by the values of the "Resistance". Probably de Broca's *Infidelity* can't be taken seriously unless he goes to Cuba; then mitigating social attitudes can be discovered in it.

American audiences and exhibitors have their own variant of the Kracauer position; they want the theatre screen to do what the television screen can't do: overpower them. The wide screen is a Procrustes bed, and all movies that don't fit its proportions have their tops and bottoms cut off. In the reissue of *Gone With the Wind*, Vivien Leigh not only has lost her feet, she ends in mid-thigh; in the now standard "SuperScope" *Henry V*, Olivier has no hair, often no head. Movies are blown-up and reissued with their colour drained away, the focus blurred. Just as silent movies are projected at sound speed (enabling audiences to laugh at the jerky, primitive, early flickers) every composition in a widened film may be destroyed—but movies are bigger than ever. It might be thought that the "small" movie is the domain of the foreign film theatres, but increasingly the art-houses are not only projecting everything in wide-screen but are looking forward to more "art blockbusters", on the model of *La Dolce Vita* and *Two Women*. However, if the art-house audience has its monomania for one element at the expense of others, it is for what is euphemistically described as a more "adult", "frank", or "realistic" treatment of human relations. One man's "reality" is poverty and mass movements; another man's reality is sex.

VII

Some critics are wet behind the ears; Kracauer is dry behind the ears. "One thing is evident: whenever a film-maker turns the spotlight on a historical subject or ventures into the realm of fantasy, he runs the risk of defying the basic properties of his medium. Roughly speaking, he seems no longer concerned with physical reality but bent on incorporating worlds which to all appearances lie outside the orbit of actuality."



"In 'Richard III' Olivier succeeds with the soliloquies as neither he nor anyone else has done on film before . . ."



"Triumph of the Will": "... a film masterpiece of a documentary nature if anything is ..."

Why doesn't he just come out with it and admit that he thinks art is unnatural? Let's stop spinning and look at some movies: Is De Sica "defying the basic properties of his medium" when he turns the great Emma Gramatica into an angelic old rattlebrain flying through the skies of *Miracle in Milan* (never mentioned in the book)? Is he "obeying" these "basic properties of the medium" when he takes a "non-professional", a college professor, and turns him into the great *Umberto D* (cited some 15 times)? Both films are staged and acted; how and why is the fantasy defying the medium, and how is it that *Umberto D*, which is just as staged as a movie set in medieval Japan or Gothic Ruritania, is supposed to have an "unfixable flow"—"the omnipresent streets breathe a tristesse which is palpably the outcome of unfortunate social conditions." May we not deduce that for Kracauer the "basic properties" of the film have more to do with "unfortunate social conditions" than with art? But *Miracle in Milan* also has something to do with "unfortunate social conditions" though De Sica's form is a comic fable about human brotherhood and innocence, a fantasy-demonstration that the pure in heart must seek the Kingdom of Heaven because, literally and ironically, they have no kingdom on earth.

Is this too stylized a treatment of social conditions to be compatible with Kracauer's notions of cinema? But then how is it that Eisenstein's triumphs of geometry and engineering "convey to us the paroxysmal upheavals of real masses"? When he moves real masses (of extras) he's helping us to see the "blind drive of things," and some of the most imaginative stylization of all time in handling masses—in *Metropolis*—can only be justified as cinema by a real howler: "the fleeing crowds (in the flood episode) are staged veraciously and rendered through a combination of long shots and close shots which provide exactly the kind of random impressions we could receive were we to witness this spectacle in reality." But all is not really well. "Yet the cinematic impact of the crowd images suffers from the fact that the scene is laid in architectural surroundings which could not be more stylized." In other words, a movie is a movie only if you can pretend it isn't a

movie. By stylized he obviously means "unreal" or "unnatural"; he should visit the new science-fiction Los Angeles airport, which is glaringly "real". There, "raw life" makes *Metropolis* seem far more prophetic than say, *October*. Perhaps a belief in progress (via the dialectic, of course) is also part of his concept of "nature".

Middle-class Marxists hate actors (who wants to be bothered by the mysteries of personality?) almost as much as they hate fantasy. Films with "non-actors" win Kracauer's special approbation: they have "a documentary touch". "Think of such story films as *The Quiet One*, *Los Olvidados*, or the De Sica films, *Bicycle Thieves* and *Umberto D*: in all of them the emphasis is on the world around us; their protagonists are not so much particular individuals as types representative of whole groups of people. [Jaibo a type! There isn't one great character in literature, in drama or in film who is a type. And in our daily lives, only the people we don't get to know function as types.] "These narratives serve to dramatise social conditions in general. The preference for real people on the screen and the documentary approach seem to be closely related." The inferences become inevitable: the non-actor is "real". The professor who gives such a great performance as *Umberto D* is acceptable because Kracauer can confuse him with nature in the raw, and he's ever so much more "real" than a highly trained actress like Emma Gramatica. But some hidden standards must also be at work: *The Roof*, which would seem to satisfy all Kracauer's notions of the "medium's" requirements, is never mentioned. Perhaps even the "medium" is depressed by dull movies.

VIII

Kracauer's description of the nature of cinema excludes, limits, rejects. *Le Sang d'un Poète* and *Un Chien Andalou* are tossed out as "a film type"—"stacy fantasy" which "cannot help producing an uncinematic effect." And with them go all the marvellous possibilities for associational editing, which for some of us makes a film like *Un Chien Andalou* seem an indication of whole new areas in art. We hadn't recognised, it

seems, that such "inner life" interests ignore camera-reality. He sets us straight about Cocteau—"a *littérateur* rather than a film-maker"; that quickly disposes of some of the greatest works of our time. *Orphée* (never mentioned) is, by his system of definitions, not a movie at all.

Soon we learn that "a sensitive spectator or listener" at the film version of Menotti's *The Medium* is "caught in a terrifying clash between cinematic realism and operatic magic . . . he feels he is being torn asunder." (Kracauer's aesthetic sensibilities are so delicate that he suffers excruciating tortures when his film sense is violated; now how can any reasonable person get so upset by a moderately successful film version of a mediocre opera?) But not only does the audience suffer: we learn that "the cinema takes revenge upon those who desert it"—poor Powell and Pressburger, their crime was that "having thrown out the cinema as a means of capturing real life" they "reintroduce it to evolve an imagery which is essentially stage imagery, even though it could not be staged in a theatre." (Isn't it amusing to discover that although what is essentially "cinema" is what can't be done in other media, there is such a thing as "essentially stage imagery, even though it could not be staged in a theatre.")

Couldn't we introduce, at this point, some sensible criteria instead of these essences and retrogressions and punishments? The trouble with *Tales of Hoffmann* is not that "it is cinema estranged from itself" or that its imagery is stazy, but that it suffers from the same monotony and failure of imagination that blight so many ballet presentations. Kracauer says, "It is natural for film—and therefore artistically promising—to prefer the enchantments of an obscure railway station to the painted splendour of enchanted woods." Couldn't we say simply that as anything a camera can record is "natural", nature is not a criterion in judging movies? An obscure railway station may be enchanting, so may painted woods. Oberon's procession in Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an exquisite, magical moment on film—indicating that what is the matter with most of the movie is not the "uncinematic" use of stylized sets, but the way they are conceived and used, how the actors and camera move, how the lines are spoken, the quality of the visual imagery, the rhythm of the action and editing, or any of the infinite number of elements that may come between a creative artist and the achievement of his goal. It may even be that Reinhardt's goal was not imaginative enough, or it may be the front-office thought it was *too* imaginative and put restrictions on him. But there is nothing uncinematic about the attempt. What an artist wants to do can't always be set in obscure railway stations or in the streets, or in contemporary settings. Why should theorists who see the poetry of the streets want to throw out the poetry of the past and of imaginary worlds?

Reading all this exaltation of the "documentary" approach, you get the impression that cinema theorists think that Griffith shot *The Birth of a Nation* while the battles were raging, that Eisenstein was making newsreels, and that Rossellini and Buñuel were simply camera-witnesses to scenes of extraordinary brutality. Ironically, the greatest director of all time to work with documentary material—the one great example Kracauer might point to—Leni Riefenstahl, whose *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympiad* are film masterpieces of a documentary nature if anything is, is not mentioned in *Nature of Film, The Redemption of Physical Reality*. Mightn't we infer that politics has something to do with Kracauer's "reality"?

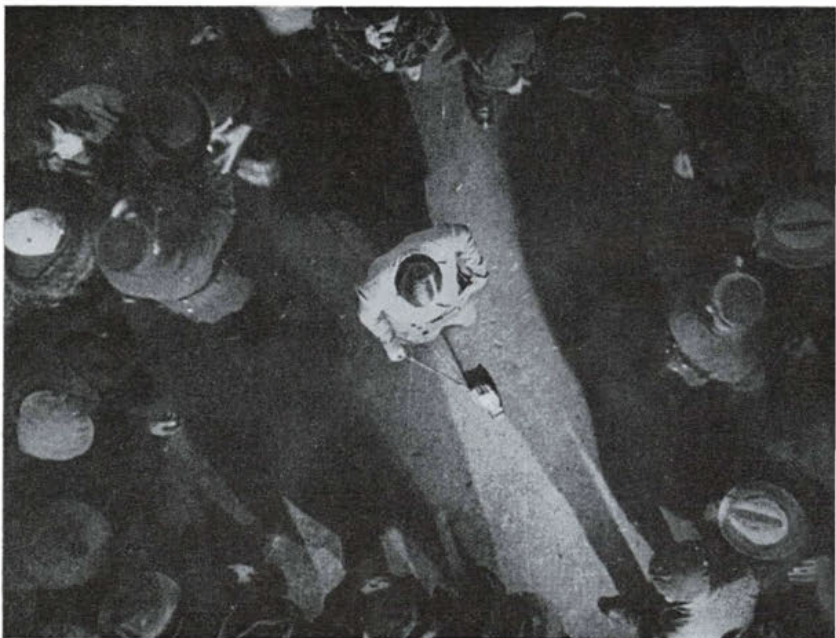
I should like to see motion picture art brought back into the world of the other arts (which it has never left, except in film theory) and see movies judged by the same kind of standards that are used in other arts, not by the attempt to erect a "reality" standard. Reality, like God and History, tends to direct people to wherever they want to go. The "reality"

standard leads Kracauer into this kind of criticism: "... Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* is essentially a miracle play, yet the medieval beliefs and superstitions it features are questioned throughout by the inquisitive mind of the knight and the outright scepticism of his squire. Both characters manifest a down-to-earth attitude. And their secular doubts result in confrontations which in a measure acclimatise the film to the medium." I would say that when a film theorist, whose book is being used as a text in many film courses, must look for "secular doubts" and "confrontations" in order to find cinematic qualities in a work, that he has sacrificed much of the art of the motion picture to his theory, and that, in his attempt to separate motion picture from other arts, he has sacrificed the most elementary responsiveness towards work in any medium—the ability to perceive a movie or a poem or an opera or a painting in something like its totality, to respond to its qualities, and to see it in relation to the artist's work as a whole. He seems overdue for secular doubts.

IX

Obviously English is not Kracauer's native language, and it seems cruel and unfair to protest his usage of it. But how can we judge what he's saying when he sets up terms and classifications (like "mental reality") that seem to mean something for him that they could hardly mean to anyone else? Are we perhaps being more generous to his ideas than we would be if we could decipher them?

What good are Kracauer's terms if no one else can apply them? How can anyone tell what fits his scheme? It's so arbitrary, it's like a catechism to which he owns the only set of correct answers. Who could guess that Rosebud, the sled of *Citizen Kane*, is one of the "symbols true to the medium"? What about the battle on the ice in *Nevsky*? (A great game for a bookmaker—most of us would lose our shirts.) It turns out that "It is nothing but an excrescence on the body of an intrigue imposed upon the medium." This man Kracauer is really one up on us. He's full of surprises: when he calls something "a veritable *tour de force*" this is a term of opprobrium: it means it isn't cinematic. If certain novels (*The Grapes of Wrath*) become "remarkable films" and others (*Madame Bovary* in the Jean Renoir version) "can hardly be called genuine cinema," what would be your guess as to the reason? Would you ever hit on "a difference which is in the adapted novels themselves"? "First, Steinbeck's novel deals in



"Un Chien Andalou": "the small street crowd seen from far above."

human groups rather than individuals . . . Through his very emphasis on collective misery, collective fears and hopes, Steinbeck meets the cinema more than halfway. Second, his novel exposes the predicament of the migratory farm workers, thus revealing and stigmatising abuses in our society. This too falls in line with the peculiar potentialities of film." Not only wouldn't I ever guess—but to go back a step, I remember Valentine Tessier at the opera and other scenes in Renoir's *Madame Bovary* ("all the traits of a theatrical film") with great pleasure, and I remember *The Grapes of Wrath* ("a classic of the screen") as a blur of embarrassing sentimental pseudo-biblical pseudo-documentary, a perfect representation of what Bertrand Russell called "the fallacy of the superior virtue of the oppressed."

How does Kracauer react to verbal comedy? To Preston Sturges, or *On Approval* or *Kind Hearts and Coronets* or, going back, to Sacha Guitry? Your guess is as good as mine, because verbal comedy doesn't really fit into his ideas of cinema and he doesn't bother with it. He refers to the Preston Sturges comedies as "borderline cases"—I assume he means on the border of his (i.e. the medium's) acceptance. Could we ever have guessed that the avant-garde experiments would have to be justified by their beneficial results? "Nor should it be forgotten that, like Buñuel, many an avant-garde artist became realistic-minded and outward-bound; Joris Ivens and Cavalcanti, for instance, turned to social documentary."

How can we make clear to Kracauer that "the snow-covered courtyard" in *Le Sang d'un Poète*—"a stagy fantasy" and "uncinematic effect" for him—might mean more to us than all his rippling leaves? The rippling leaves are admired and then, more often than not, forgotten; Cocteau's images reverberate in our minds and memories. And what does he single out to attack in *Un Chien Andalou* ("a hybrid") but the "small street crowd seen from far above"—which is not "integrated into contexts suggestive of camera-reality." Buñuel and Dali "availed themselves of the camera in a literary rather than genuinely cinematic interest." That "small street crowd seen from far above" is one of the most startling and disturbing images in films; I, at least, have forgotten most of those street crowd scenes he thinks it should resemble.

What we actually respond to or remember from a film may be almost totally unrelated to Kracauer's definitions. (You can't exactly say he has *standards*—his standards are concealed as definitions of what a movie is. It's a timid way out; you never have to defend your choices; the medium has made them

for you.) For example, although Kracauer uses René Clair to bolster his arguments against what he calls "surrealistic imagery," the only part of Clair's *Porte des Lilas* I cared for was the little set-piece of the children acting out a crime as the adults read a newspaper account of it—an almost surrealist little ballet with no connection to the rest of the film. The only sequence I recall from *Rickshaw Man* is the distant view of an Englishman's little dance of rage as he's kept waiting in his rickshaw. *Aparajito* was beautiful, but it is all hazy in memory except for that sudden ecstasy of the child reciting poetry.

In film after film, what we recall may be a gesture or a bit of dialogue, a suggestion, an imaginative moment of acting, even the use of a prop. Suddenly something—almost anything—may bring a movie to life. It is art and imagination that bring the medium to life; not as Kracauer would have it, the recording of "reality". I can't remember much of the streets and crowds and the life-like milieu even from the neo-realist films—who does? But who can forget the cry of the boy at the end of *Shoeshine*, or the face of *Umberto D.*, or Anna Magnani's death in *Open City*? I would suggest these experiences are very similar to the experiences we have in the theatre. But shouldn't we take our bits and pieces of human revelation wherever we find them? There isn't so much to be had that we need to worry about whether what we get from a movie is only possible in "cinema" or whether we could have received a similar impression, or even the total conception, in a novel or in the theatre.

How can so many of the aspects of film—the very qualities that draw us to the medium—be *improper* to it? And the movies that suggest directions, hopes, possibilities? How is it that he has so little interest in the visual and emotional excitements of a Futurist experiment like *Menilmontant*? (What does he think of *Menilmontant*—one of the dazzling masterpieces of the screen? It narrates "fictitious incidents embedded in poetised actuality." Is that supposed to be bad or good? I rather think, bad.)

After 300 pages Kracauer triumphantly reaches "The Redemption of Physical Reality" and when he finally presents the proof of the pudding, it turns out to be—a pudding. ". . . In order to make us experience physical reality, films must show what they picture. This requirement is so little self-evident that it raises the issue of the medium's relation to the traditional arts." And so on into the night. We've covered all that heavily trod old ground from Nietzsche to Comte to Whitehead, and Spengler to Toynbee and Durkheim. Kracauer must think we read books on the movies to get our knowledge of history and philosophy.

How is it that the "medium" stands so square for liberal, middle-class social consciousness? And how is it that in a period when even a college freshman has heard something about how our perspectives affect our notions of "reality", Kracauer goes on writing about his view of "unfortunate social conditions" as "reality"? Films are not made by cameras, though many of them look as if they were, just as a lot of dialogue sounds as if it were written by typewriters.

Art is the greatest game, the supreme entertainment, because you discover the game as you play it. There is only one rule, as we learned in *Orphée*: Astonish us! In all art we look and listen for what we have not experienced quite that way before. We want to see, to feel, to understand, to respond a new way. Why should pedants be allowed to spoil the game?

There are men whose concept of love is so boring and nagging that you decide if that's what love is, you don't want it, you want something else. That's how I feel about Kracauer's "cinema". I want something else.

Nadia Sibirskaia in "Menilmontant": ". . . one of the dazzling masterpieces of the screen."



IN THE PICTURE

Viewing Figures

TOWARDS THE END OF LAST YEAR, BBC Television tried an experiment in film presentation, when they showed three Eisenstein features (*Alexander Nevsky*, followed by both parts of *Ivan the Terrible*) on three successive Friday evenings. Prestige value, obviously high; but in terms of viewing figures they must have assumed that virtue would more or less have to be its own reward. Startlingly, the BBC is able to claim an average audience of five million for each of the programmes, with each film attracting a slightly larger public and slightly more enthusiastic reactions than its predecessor. In television terms, five million is still a minority audience; in cinema terms, it would represent a fantastic public for these particular films. If, for instance, the National Film Theatre were to take it into its head to run one film continuously, and if it could count on full houses at every performance, it would take just over twelve years to reach five million people. The BBC does it in a night—though how many of the five million, the next day, could have told you Eisenstein's name or who he was?

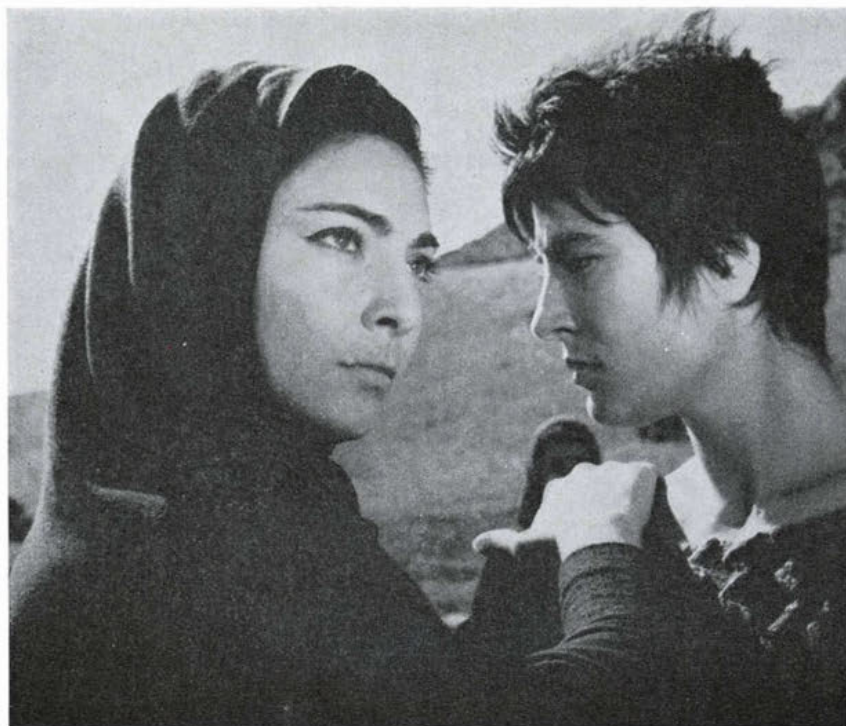
The figures for the Eisenstein films are quite a bit higher than those for the BBC's regular magazine programmes on the cinema. They claim a 4.5 million audience for *Picture Parade* and about 3 million for *The Cinema Today* and the various similar programmes put on by Victor Poole. By comparison with *Picture Parade* (current releases; star and director interviews), Victor Poole's more adventurous and inevitably more esoteric series (Resnais, Antonioni, Riefenstahl; Soviet, Polish, Italian surveys) seems to be standing up well in the ratings. Both, though, have to rely on the formula of interviews plus extracts. And the clips from CinemaScope films, with only half the screen getting into the TV picture, can be dangerously distorting. A dialogue scene from *The Innocents*, for instance, done in one calm take, looked on TV like an excitable ping-pong match.

All these figures suggest a fairly high level of public interest in the cinema, which isn't borne out by the audience attendance figures, still dropping, though less steeply, and in 1961 down to an average of under nine million per week. In fact, many more people now watch the BBC's Saturday evening film (a twelve million average, they assert) than visit all the country's cinemas during the week. Of course these figures really prove nothing very much, except a truism about television: what people are prepared to watch on it has not necessarily much relation to their outside, non-television interests. But it's a truism of which the BBC can take advantage by extending its film repertory. Five million for Eisenstein; 12,700,000 (on Christmas Day, at that) for *Rebecca*; 11,700,000 for *Just William's Luck*. On television all films are equal, though some are more equal than others.

Psychorama

NICHOLAS FAITH writes: A few years ago subliminal techniques were used in a series of advertising films in America, by which cinema-goers were told that they were hungry and thirsty and promptly went out and bought hot dogs and Coca-Cola. Now the first experiment has been carried out to see whether it is possible to apply these techniques to feature films. The three people involved in the experiment are Harry Saltzman (producer of *Look Back in Anger*), Dr. Dickson, a psychologist from University College, London, and Mr. Bob Casher, who introduces the experiment. Mr. Casher is something of a spellbinder even without subliminal aids; he made a fortune out of a hairdressing which he sold himself on the American radio.

In his introduction Mr. Casher is at pains to dissociate himself from the previous advertising experiments, which aroused a storm of protest and were banned by the FCC. He claims that these new experiments are serving a legitimate artistic purpose, by enhancing the audience's appreciation of a scene. In view of this, it is perhaps



Irene Papas (right) in Michael Cacoyannis' "Electra".

unfortunate that the section chosen to illustrate the process (which is being called Psychorama) comes from the recent production of *Jack the Ripper*. In a London street scene of the 1880's a woman is murdered. The scene is first shown with the superimposed images at the proper (subconscious) level; then again with them exaggerated so that you can see what is going on. They are very cleverly positioned over whatever you are most likely to be watching on the screen. The first one comes over the first shot: a general view of a foggy street. The words 'London, 1888' come up at the bottom (liminally); then skulls are put in the eights (subliminally). When we first see the woman (liminally) we get the word 'mother' on the ground (subliminally). As a cart goes away from the camera (liminally), the word 'murder' appears (subliminally) behind it. The fun gets faster in the killing itself: the audience has 'death' flashed at its subconscious several times, and having identified itself as the victim's son is told to 'kill her', both in voice and vision.

It is obviously difficult to know how the technique will work, since one spends the whole time trying to cheat and actually see consciously what is supposed to be subliminal. I feel that this temptation would be overpowering for most people, especially if they knew what to look out for. And this trial scene is hardly a fair test in any case (whatever one may feel about its content) since the audience will know what reactions are expected of it. It might have been more interesting and revealing to have played a non-committal conversation between a man and a girl and to have shown this three times: once straight, once with a strong suggestion that they were falling in love, and once with a suggestion that they hate each other. It may be, of course, that present techniques are not strong enough to do more than enhance (in a showmanlike way) feelings of terror or love already experienced consciously; they might be a useful adjunct—like the bits of dripping cloth which hang over people's faces in the Tunnel of Death at fairs—but not of any great artistic interest. But the technique is obviously capable of further development. I personally look forward a few years to a future *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* which would consist of a blank screen and a silent sound track. What would it do to your subconscious? No doubt Messrs. Robbe-Grillet and Resnais will disagree again.

Script by Christopher Fry

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR writes: After touching the fringes of film script-writing in Peter Brook's version of *The Beggar's Opera*, and getting more and more deeply involved in *Ben-Hur*, Christopher Fry has finally taken the plunge in Dino de Laurentiis' *Barabbas* ("a



Simone Signoret and Laurence Olivier on the set of "Term of Trial", which Peter Glenville is filming in Ireland and Paris.

human story with bursts of spectacle") with a screenplay for which he is completely responsible from first to last.

It was not, he confesses, a subject which he would have chosen off his own bat, "if only because after *Ben-Hur* I would rather have got away from Biblical times," but having read Lagerkvist's book with enthusiasm when it first came out, and later seen the Sjöberg film version with more modified rapture—someone ran it through at Cinecittà for some forgotten purpose during the making of *Ben-Hur*—he found the subject sympathetic and the prospect of being his own master on the job agreeable.

The resultant script apparently departs quite considerably from the book, which the earlier film followed slavishly. "I began with a fairly faithful adaptation, but found that the long flashbacks about Barabbas's affair with the girl with the hare-lip and his relations with his father just would not fit in neatly, since in the book they are merely explanatory digressions, interesting but quite undramatic. I was sorry to lose the story of the father, but after a lot of twisting and turning I decided it must go and now the film has no flashbacks at all. I have tried instead to exemplify Barabbas's dilemma of not belonging anywhere by giving a consistently symbolic slant to the conflict in his life between light and darkness. He is constantly struggling towards the light (literally in the sulphur mines sequence, metaphorically elsewhere, with Christianity represented by the unearthly light he sees around Christ in the prison and its temporary eclipse by the eclipse of the sun at the Crucifixion); and the final line of the film, as of the book, is his address to Darkness: "To thee I give up my soul."

Did Mr. Fry envisage the possibility of writing an original screenplay, much as he would an original stage play and with the same degree of personal involvement? "Well, I talked about it in a general way with Wyler when we were working on *Ben-Hur*, and I don't see why not. But I haven't any definite ideas as yet. I may be involved next in scripting *The Bible* for Laurentiis, but I want to finish another stage play first and I don't know how long he can wait. That would be very interesting: it's all a question of finding a consistent dramatic progression in the story which would be as vivid today as that of the miracle-cycles was to medieval audiences. A clergyman recently sent me a chart he had worked out demonstrating the continuity of progress towards enlightenment in the Old Testament; but the result, though I'm sure unimpeachable theologically, was hardly dramatic. I'll have to think about it..."

Oberhausen Festival

DEREK HILL writes: A demonstration of a huge projection apparatus, brought all the way from Copenhagen solely to show a thirty-second cartoon on a crystal globe, brought the eighth Oberhausen festival of short films to an appropriately improbable climax. A deliberate West German snub to the East Germans, apparently intended as retaliation to *The Wall*, had provoked the withdrawal of every Communist entry—except the Yugoslavs—a week before the festival, reducing the number of films shown in competition to under eighty. A group of younger West German film-makers used the festival to hold a press conference claiming that their elders refused to move over and give them a chance in features, but the German shorts shown suggested that the only alternatives that most of this would-be new wave have to offer are chi-chi photography, staccato cutting and *musique concrète*. The only entry which considered the face of contemporary Germany (and agreeably condemned the people as a bourgeois race of garden dwarfs) was a cartoon, Wolfgang Urich's *Die Gartenzwerg*.

The most anxious entries were from America. 18-year-old Dan Drasin's *Sunday* noses into a clash between demonstrating folk-singers and police in Washington Square and knits its newsreel-like footage into a complex study of the meaning and techniques of authority. Apart from Ernest Pintoff's *The Shoes* and *Munro*, the splendid Feiffer cartoon directed by Gene Deitch which gleefully contemplates the refusal of the American army to acknowledge the fact that it has called up a four-year-old child for military service, the other American entries were somewhat fumblingly directed. But they shared a fierce disenchantment. Morton Heilig's *Assembly Line*, a surprising Grand Prix winner, sympathetically examines the wretchedness of a lonely young worker's night on the town. Marvin Starkman's *The American Way* offers an anarchist eager to blow up everything from the Yankee Stadium to apple pie.

Yugoslavia, whose delegation almost outnumbered the Germans, presented a few well-meant live action shorts so ponderously treated that the deftness of the latest Zagreb cartoons seemed even more inspired than usual. *Don Quixote* won the animation prize, but this fascinatingly far out medley of clanking shapes, bluebottle policemen and live action windmills adds up less effectively than either *Boomerang*, a parable of the havoc wrought by a butterfly at a missile base, or *Erzatz*, in which a bumbling holiday-maker inflates a beachful of equipment with an air pump, including a genuinely pneumatic heroine.

Although the jury contrived to mention eighteen titles, they still neglected an incisive entry from Spain, Basilio Patinos' *Torerillos*. Patinos uses the sound track to contrast the conventional tributes of press and toreadors to the glory of the arena with a visual presentation of the facts concerning the boys who face possible death or injury and certain imprisonment to grab an illegal chance before the bull. The result is pointed enough to be forbidden to Spanish audiences.

The best of the rest: *Le Gros et le Maigre*, the latest short by Roman Polanski, a bitter allegory in which a master finds the best way of keeping his slave by removing the intolerable restrictions which he himself imposed; *Cat Stealers*, a fresh, sharp fable from Brazil; and another Grand Prix winner, *Heureux Anniversaire*, a breathtakingly inventive comedy by Pierre Etaix, a brilliant music-hall comedian now making his first feature.

Production in Britain

CARL FOREMAN: *The Victors*; Foreman directs for the first time, from his own screenplay based on Alexander Baron's novel. Subject: a group of soldiers during the last war, and their slow surrender to the corruption that lies in wait for the victors. For Columbia release.

SIDNEY FURIE: *The Boys*, trial story about a group of youths arrested for coshing a night watchman. Jess Conrad leads the boys; Richard Todd and Robert Morley represent the older generation. For Gala.

PETER GLENVILLE: *Term of Trial*, adapted by Gavin Lambert from James Barlow's novel about a schoolmaster, his wife and the girl who becomes infatuated with him. With Laurence Olivier, Simone Signoret, Sarah Miles, James Woolf, for Warner-Pathé.

JAMES HILL: *The Dock Brief*, an adaptation of John Mortimer's legal comedy, with Peter Sellers and Richard Attenborough sharing eleven parts between them. Dmitri de Grunwald, for M-G-M.

JEREMY SUMMERS: 30-year-old director from TV, whose first feature will be Tony Hancock's second. Title: *The Punch and Judy Man*, from a script by Hancock himself in collaboration with Philip Oakes. Sylvia Syms plays Hancock's wife. For Associated British.

IN ENGLAND WE HAVE CND, the National Film Theatre and SIGHT AND SOUND, the foundation stone of a National Theatre and the Royal Ballet; but we have no national film school. Which is strange; because apart from America, practically every other major producing country in the world has some kind of national training institution. There are schools in Brazil, Czechoslovakia, Chile, China, France, Holland, both Germanies, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Spain, Hungary, Russia and Formosa. Some are more successful than others; all can claim to contribute genuine creative talent to their national industries. The Soviet, Polish and Hungarian schools now provide the majority of their cinema's artistic personnel. Gerami, De Santis, Antonioni and Maselli all started in the Centro Sperimentale in Rome; Alain Resnais left IDHEC, disillusioned apparently, halfway through the course.

If we ever come round to setting up a film school in this country, we have at least the advantage of being able to draw on the experience of these established film schools. The oldest of them is the State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow, established in 1919, at Lenin's personal instigation. Germany had schools as early as the Twenties, though few of them survived Hitler, and the present establishments in Munich and Potsdam are both post-war creations. The Centro Sperimentale dates back to 1935 and Mussolini. Most of the other national schools have been set up since the war.

In teaching methods all these schools start from the same basic assumption, first voiced by Lev Kuleshov, one of the oldest teachers still at work in VGIK: "You can't teach talent." You cannot make people creative if they are not creative to start with. It is the same as in any form of art teaching: you can give technique, and you can offer critical guidance and advice; but in the end the artist is there, inside, or he is not. The school's concern is to probe and develop creative capacity that is already latent; its most useful activity is to put actual film into the hands of its students.

To develop the potential artist, existing schools offer courses ranging in duration from two years (at IDHEC and the Centro Sperimentale) to the luxurious five or six years possible in the Eastern European countries. On the whole the Western schools aim to use the short time at their disposal to turn out cinematic Jacks-of-all-trades. The Eastern schools groom specialists, with a sound grounding in general techniques. In Moscow—which has provided a model for most post-war schools in the Communist countries—there are six faculties: for Directors, Scenarists, Cameramen, Art Directors, Actors and for Critics and Historians.

Allowing for these differences, curricula are organised on very much the same lines all over the world. Theoretical work is mainly devoted to general cultural education, and film technique, history and aesthetics. The proportion of time given over to practical work increases as the course advances—in Russia the last year or so is devoted almost exclusively to practical work with film. Since there is no better way of learning than doing, the comparative success of the existing schools seems to depend mostly on their resources for practical work. Practical work is, too, the only sure way of measuring a student's attainment. In Poland and the USSR it is expected that students' graduate work will reach fully professional standards; and a great many diploma exercises find their way into the public cinemas. Mostly, of course, these are shorts; but the highly successful children's film *My Friend Kolka* was a collaborative diploma film. In Western schools, where limited funds restrict most practical work to 16mm, student films rarely find their way into the cinemas.

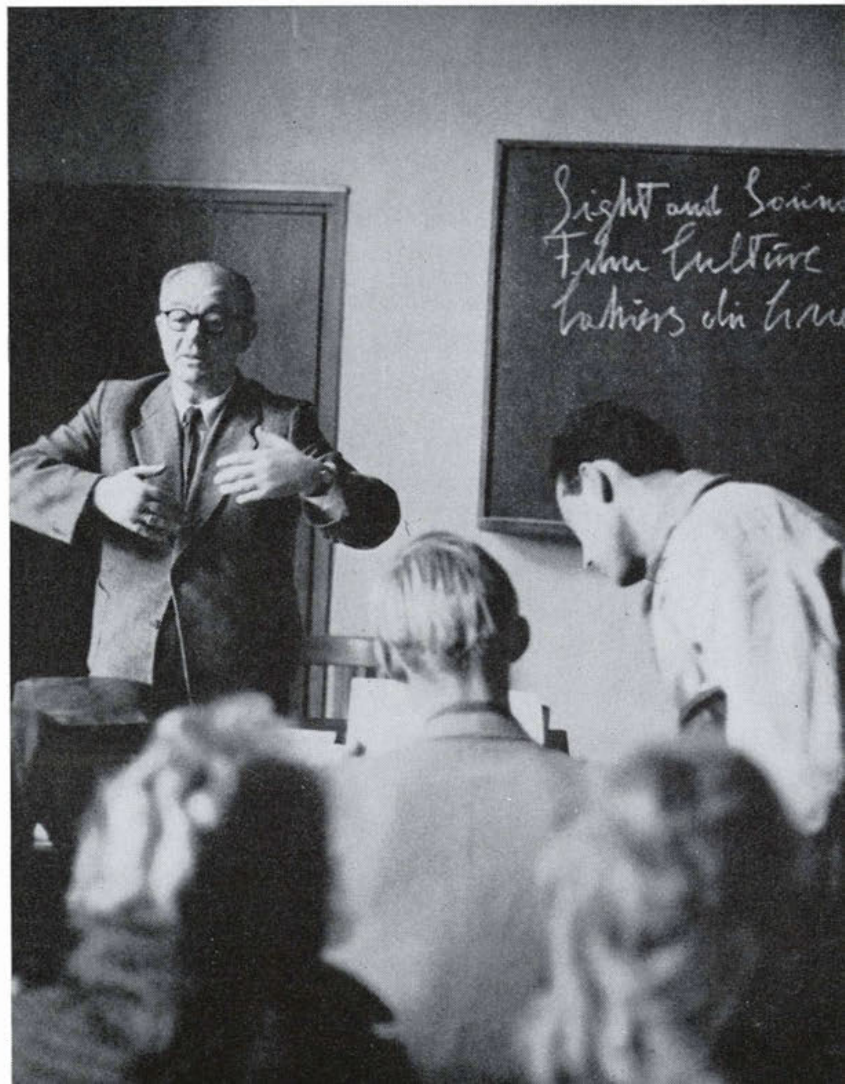
Again the Western schools cannot generally call upon such impressive reserves of teaching talent as the Eastern schools boast, with the resources of State-controlled cinemas at their disposal. One of the glories of the Moscow school is that Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, Youtkevich, Kozintsev, Kuleshov and Tisse have been among its teachers.

Given such resources, and their years of experience, the

BETTER LATE N THAN EVER

DAVID ROBINSON

A class in criticism at the Polish film school.



film schools of Europe have been able, at the very least, to turn out a regular supply of adequately equipped technicians. At their best they have modelled finished artists out of the material—raw as it may have been—that they received. It must remain debatable whether Chukrai, Wajda, Munk, Antonioni could have emerged so rapidly and completely without the background of certain technical experience their schools gave them. Between these possibilities, schools have a potential to become creative workshops, where fledged directors could exercise themselves and experiment—much as Gerassimov did in working out his ideas for *The Young Guard* with his students at VGIK. The schools have imposed a level both of culture and technique which has demonstrably enriched their national cinemas.

* * *

Well of course that's all very well for foreigners. But in England we have no such thing as a film culture and we still don't take the cinema very seriously outside Josh Billings' box-office column in *Kine Weekly*. The idea of cinema at an academic level is laughable . . . or at least it was until a year or so ago. Now attitudes are changing. The principles of fairground showmanship are getting out of date; there are possibilities in this country of a more contemporary, intelligent cinema. At last the old principle that the audience gets the cinema it deserves is going out of fashion. The cinema creates the audience; and it seems not impossible that the British cinema could create an audience nearly as receptive as the one that the better French and Italian producers have been able to assume for years. In this climate, a good many people in and out of the industry have been exercising their minds with the project of a British national film school. The most persuasive appeal so far has come from Carl Foreman, a producer whose opinion can carry weight equally with the commercials and the intellectuals. In a letter to the trade press, discussing the allocation of the British Film Production Fund, Mr. Foreman said:

One more suggestion. I also feel that the healthiest thing that could happen to the British film industry would be the diversion of a small proportion of the Production Fund for the establishment of a national film school, such as are becoming increasingly numerous on the continent. We must recognise that we are, at best, a middle-aged industry, and we must ask ourselves who will be writing, directing, producing, acting in and otherwise contributing to British films ten years from now. I feel a national film school is not only a highly practical possibility, but something that is vitally needed.

Mr. Foreman's most serious concern is with this 'middle-aged industry'. For the proof of his contention it is only necessary to compare the general aspect of a film studio with that of a television studio. Television at present has all the benefits (and liabilities, of course) of young personnel. Since the beginning of the war, recruitment to the film industry has been disproportionately small. During the war young people were not available; since the war the ACTT has kept a close watch on entrants. In the days before commercial television, when work available in the industry was constantly dwindling, such safeguards were justifiable. Now that television has taken up the slack of labour, it seems illogical that recruitment should not be in the same proportion to manpower and wastage as in any other industry. One is led to fear that the union may be protecting its unemployable rather than its unemployed by persisting in its hesitancy over recruitment.

But young blood is vital to the health of the industry and art. Young men can make films that middle-aged men cannot. It is not simply a question of courage or energy or creativity. Carl Foreman, at 47, says, "Success carries its penalties. By its very nature success removes you from your roots and from the mainstreams of life. You tend to congregate exclusively

with film people. You no longer want to wait for a bus on a rainy day when you can afford to travel more comfortably; and you no longer want to go out making shoe-string budget films on street locations. You get out of touch with what is going on in the world of young people. Eventually all you have in common with them is the determination not to be blown up by an H-bomb."

It is a serious situation; and only in favourable circumstances—with the union modifying its attitude towards recruitment—could the existence of a film school in this country help to overcome it. But, given these circumstances, a properly organised training system would appear an infinitely more economical method of recruiting young people into the industry than the time-honoured hit and miss way that people have entered films since the Ecole de Brighton casually stumbled into production. Of course people have become directors and writers and actors and even art directors by starting out as tea-boys or assistants to the old lady in the wardrobe; but they have lost a good deal of time on the way, and probably arrived tired, disillusioned, and already middle-aged. Even when eventually they discover their proper métier, they are possibly not adequately equipped for it. The wastage of a hit and miss system affects the industry in general as well as its recruits.

At a national level there are still more persuasive arguments for a film school. "If there were no other justification," says Robin Darwin, Principal of the Royal College of Art, "it would be sufficient that the countries of the Left feel it worth while for the propagation of their—to my mind—misbegotten ideas, to pour large sums of money into film schools, which attract pupils from the newly-developing areas of the world. If we believe in our own ideologies and our own democracies, then we should be attracting them to our film schools."

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Opinion in this country is shifting in favour of film schools; but it is one thing to persuade people that a film school would



Polish film school: a student at work in the cutting-room.

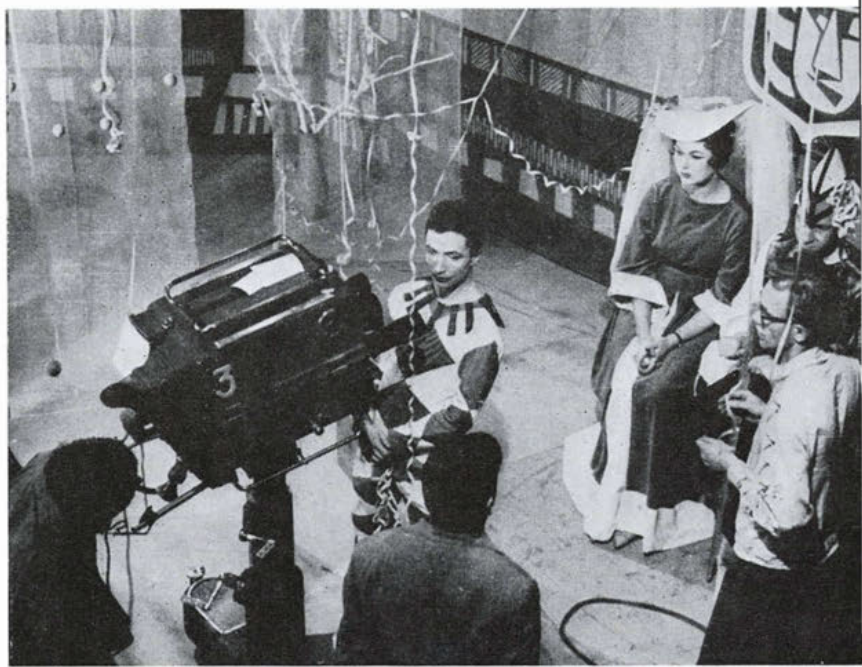
be a Good Thing; another to do something about it. As yet only small beginnings have been achieved.

The most evident practical activity is that of the London School of Film Technique, a private institution in Brixton. This school offers a six-months' practical course in cinema subjects, with classroom instruction in aspects of film art, history and technique, and a certain amount of film practice, most of which, for economic reasons, has to be on 16mm. Several hours a week are spent in viewing and discussing professional film productions. The name of the school and the duration and arrangement of the course imply that the emphasis is on the technique rather than on the artistic and aesthetic aspects of film-making. The organisers of the school are conscious of their limitations as a private, self-supporting organisation. They feel themselves a pilot or a provisional scheme, and optimistically anticipate being superseded by a more permanent, officially sponsored institution. Already some years ago they expressed the hope that the school would "eventually be taken over by a body set up by the film and television industries . . ."

The London School of Film Technique has several important lessons for future planners. The most important is that education is not, in money terms, an economic enterprise. Students at the London School pay upwards of 110 guineas for the six-month course; and, one may estimate, get their money's worth, no more or less. Now although 110 guineas is quite a substantial fee to pay, 110 guineas' worth of education does not amount to very much. With a gross income of perhaps not more than about £8,000 a year, the London School of Film Technique is severely restricted in what it can offer. It has made the most of its premises in Brixton, which give the impression of being a set left over from a German silent film. Its choice of instructors is necessarily limited, though on the whole people in the industry seem to be quite generous with their time for teaching purposes. Most seriously, a hundred guineas a head does not cover much film stock and equipment for the practical film-making which must be the basis of any effective training.

On the other hand the importance of any establishment concerned with education lies less in its faculty and facilities than in its students. The London School of Film Technique annually passes through its hands up to sixty full-time students, a majority of them coming from overseas and Commonwealth countries. Applications for places, the School claims, exceed this number, so that they are able to be selective about quality. Among the students—aged from 17 to 28—there is every sign of real enthusiasm. Perhaps the most important thing their money buys is the incentive to spend six months thinking about little else but films and film-making; and if during that time they become dissatisfied with what the school can offer them, it is, in a way, a sign of the school's success. If, every year or so, the school can reveal, even though it has not the facilities to develop, a small creative talent, it is some justification. Student exercises show every sign of aspiration if not of accomplishment. One recent school film, *Roundabout*, has something of the quality of a raw *Two Men and a Wardrobe*. With a properly endowed school, the talent need not remain raw.

The educational minimum required by the London School of Film Technique is five subjects in G.C.E. This is low by the standards of the European national schools; and seems a shaky test of the cultural attainments and calibre of prospective students. A non-technical attempt to introduce higher academic standards into cinema studies is the University of London lectureship, attached to the Slade School. For a preliminary experimental period the department consists of a lecturer (at present this is Thorold Dickinson) and two research students engaged on project theses. At first sight this might appear to have little relevance to a professional training school; but to compete and to compare with established schools, to play a positively creative role, a British school would need to be based on higher academic standards of



Polish film school students on a TV training course.

criticism and appreciation than we can at present claim. It would be a hard fight against characteristic, deep-rooted British attitudes to the cinema—the complacency of audiences, film-makers and critics about the standard of our films, the insistent, defensive dissociation of the cinema from 'art'.

The most likely field of activity, however, is the Royal College of Art, where a small department of film and television design (they prefer, more specifically, to call it "Design for the Moving Image", which indicates a reluctance to acknowledge a wide division between the two media) has developed over the past three years or so. At present it consists of a staff of two, and half-a-dozen students, all of them post-graduates of the College. During the next academic year the number of the students will probably be doubled; and graduate applicants from other art schools are being considered for places. The emphasis, naturally, is on graphic design. But, says Robin Darwin, the Director of the College, "we approach it, as we do everything here, professionally."

There is powerful support for a project for a full-scale film school to be attached to the RCA. The scheme, which has long been fostered by the British Film Institute, has the friendly interest of the unions and trade organisations, as well as the SFTA and its president, the Duke of Edinburgh. Sir Michael Balcon, a governor of the College, is especially enthusiastic about the idea. Before the current Government economies, the Ministry of Education also seemed interested in the scheme; but Treasury support would probably depend upon the school's catering both for film and television training. It is unlikely that the television industry would agree to support the scheme at least until the Pilkington Report; and even then television might be slower to recognise the benefits of a combined school than the film industry. Robin Darwin has no doubt about the advantages of a combined training school: "To think of a film school exclusively is as if someone who believes, rightly, in steam locomotion were to oppose the study of steam and electric locomotion . . . Television desperately needs something of this sort. So far it has not attracted the major creative people—people of the ability of Grierson or Wright." The danger that a school which grew up out of the Royal College of Art might begin and continue with a bias towards the graphic elements of film-making would to some extent be offset by the advantages of association with the high professional and academic standards of the College.



The London School of Film Technique's "Roundabout".

Apart from this, of course, various Polytechnics offer training in cinematography within their photographic departments, but none of their courses seems to qualify as professional training in cinema technique. The drama schools, too, have in recent years added to their curricula the study of film and television acting technique, though none of them appears to claim a comprehensive study of film method, or actual film practice.

* * *

Any future film school in this country will need to take into consideration and co-ordinate all these existing teaching schemes. At the same time, one may hope as an ideal for a radical creation. A compromise, something that developed, empirically and Topsy-like, out of existing organisations, would take too long to establish itself in competition with Moscow or with Lodz. The least and the best we should hope for, ideally, is a method and an establishment that is integrally conceived, from the roots up. Other countries offer enough experience and enough examples to make that possible.

Of course, before we could begin to create a training scheme, we would have to consider what kind of art or industry it was to serve. It is basic to know whether it is to be the industry of *Carry on Cruising* and *Go to Blazes*; or the industry of *A Taste of Honey* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*; or an industry capable of producing side by side a *Rocco*, an *Il*



Posto, a *L'Avventura*. Mr. Billing's cinema, in fact, or Miss Powell's.

Even more important than facilities for technical training is the need for a conception about what the cinema is and what it is about. That is why the right teachers, the kind who themselves have some sort of ideal in the cinema, and can infect their students with it, are vital. The Moscow School had Eisenstein and has Youtkevitch; Lodz has Aleksander Ford. A British school would only be worth supporting if it could call upon the best men in the business—the Reeds, the Andersons, the Carricks, the Foremans—and not just those who could most easily be spared.

Carl Foreman remembers with gratitude the days—the late Thirties and early Forties—when the big Hollywood studios were able to afford embryonic apprentice schemes. Prospective writers, directors and actors were hired on six-month contracts and asked only to explore the studio and to learn what they could about the business of making films. At the end of that time their contracts might be renewed, to enable them to try their own hands at the job of their choice. M-G-M, still in possession of its exhibition and distribution interests, had a big programme of short-film production, and the tyros were let loose on this. It was in this way that Zinnemann and Dassin took their first significant steps in the industry. The need, Foreman says, is not for a school with classrooms and libraries, but for opportunities to get into the studios and cutting-rooms, to make films. He sees as an ideal method of film study the production by students of feature films under professional conditions, under the supervision of teachers who are themselves professional producers, directors, writers. (This corresponds very closely to the Moscow organisation of 'teams' under 'masters'—men of the professional status of Kuleshov or Gerassimov. It recalls, too, how much Satyajit Ray learned by being around on the set when Renoir filmed *The River*.)

The classroom, of course, still has its place. After almost seventy years, there is now a body and a tradition of "film culture" (for want of a better phrase) and a whole aesthetic of cinema which is as indispensable to new generations in the contemporary cinema as a nodding acquaintance with the tradition which links Leonardo and Hogarth is useful to the painter.

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Any project for a film school must eventually depend on the maximum co-operation of the industry and its organisations and unions. For the first time there seems to be agreement within the film industry (and as time goes on the television industry must find itself equally involved) that film schools are not only desirable, but essential to a vital cinema. But the existence of an effective film school is impossible without the industry's own contributions. The strength of the schools in Eastern Europe is their close contact with the industries—the studios on the one hand, the archives and *cinémathèques* on the other. Only with professional resources and in a professional environment can film study have real significance. And it can have no meaning at all unless the trade and the unions can, within the limitations of the current economic climate, offer some promise of employment to graduates. The Moscow Institute is in the happy position of being unable to fulfil all the demands of the developing film industries of the Soviet republics. Too many IDHEC graduates, on the other hand, are working, disillusioned and far away from the cinema, as journalists or advertising men.

Finally, however, the key to the whole business is money. It is impossible to say how much a school like VGIK in Moscow costs to maintain, because its budget is inextricably involved with the rest of the industry, the archives and national

(Continued on page 103)

Soviet diploma production: "My Friend Kolka".

THE REWARDS OF QUALITY

Penelope
Houston

WHEN THE FRENCH revised their cinema aid law in 1959, they also, as terminological realists, introduced a change of wording. The funds until then scheduled for the "development" of the cinema now go to its "support"; and by 1968, it is assumed, state aid will have tapered to nothing. Development implies that a subsidy is intended to serve as something of an incentive; support suggests less ambitious objectives. In any case, the French system performs much the same function as the British, and, as the Economist Intelligence Unit pointed out in our last issue, the amounts of money available in both countries are comparable.

In Britain, direct aid to the production side of the industry—as opposed to loans from the National Film Finance Corporation—comes from the British Film Production Fund. The late Sir Wilfred Eady devised the scheme in the days of entertainments tax, and a small levy is still made on the price of each cinema ticket. The Customs and Excise collect the money; the British Film Fund Agency pays it out, at the rate currently of about £3.9 million a year. So this is not really a state subsidy, unless one assumes—which one obviously shouldn't—that if the levy ceased to exist exhibitors would knock the odd fractions of a penny off the cost of cinema tickets. It amounts, in effect, to a form of aid provided by exhibition to production.

France applies a similar system, and her exhibitors, it should perhaps be noted, are still burdened with entertainments tax. In both countries the money is paid out to the producers in accordance with the earnings of their films. Is this a just system? Carl Foreman suggested in a recent letter to the *Kinematograph Weekly* that it isn't entirely so. The film-maker who has already raked in the largest profits at the box-office, he suggested, was not the one in most urgent need of further assistance. Mr. Foreman clearly had the earnings of his own *Guns of Navarone* in mind; and was in the rare and enviable position of being able to hint that a film could do almost too well.

Other producers might not be so generous. And in any case it is difficult to see that any other system for dispensing the bulk of the money would work out more equitably, or come closer to achieving the desired objectives. A commercially

successful industry will provide our own cinemas with British product, will stand a better chance in the overseas market, and will maintain a good level of employment in the studios. These are the proper ends: they are much more likely to be achieved by subsidising success than by propping up failure. "Without the levy," said the National Film Finance Corporation in its last annual report, "there would have been a substantial shortfall."

Accept this, however, and we are still left with a subsidy system conceived in terms of "support". There are no built-in incentives, other than the obvious and logical commercial ones. The French, even since the revision of their own aid law, have kept a kind of double standard in mind. The system of *primes à la qualité* has been modified, but enough of it survives to give France a head start over most other western nations* when it comes to encouraging quality as well as commerce. How does this system in fact work? What might there be in it for us?

The philosophy behind it seems, as much as anything, to be that of Jacques Flaud, ex-director of the Centre National de la Cinématographie. Some years ago, just before the first onslaught of the New Wave, Flaud gave an interview to *Le Monde*. "If producers are unwilling to give opportunities to young directors," he said, "if they prefer to trust to 'sure things', if a distributor restricts himself for commercial reasons to remakes and 'series', if a director tries more for profit than for his own development, the French cinema will mark time, will stiffen up . . ." The answer lay in a policy which encouraged producers to take chances. "The hope is in risk, and the cinema could be saved by its quality." This was not the self-congratulation with which official spokesmen usually review their industries' achievements, but a conscious challenge. The challenge was accepted, the risks taken, the new directors came and conquered. Whatever the difficulties—and of course there have been many—the French cinema in 1962 remains a driving force.

Would this impetus towards experiment have fought its way through unaided? It's difficult for an overseas observer to comment; and of course the directors had to be there before the films could be made. But the *prime à la qualité* system, and the whole attitude of mind behind it, must certainly have helped, and to a significant extent.

* * *

There is not much point in considering how the original, and more liberal, system operated. What happens now is that a percentage of the total funds available to the government is set aside to provide interest free loans to certain selected productions. The money goes to the producer of the film, after it has been viewed and approved by a jury. He is being given, in effect, a kind of minimum guaranteed return on his investment: depending on the film's takings, this advance will or will not have to be repaid.

What sort of films qualify for these advances, and how much money can a producer reasonably expect? The "quality" films are by no means all New Wave experiments. Three categories, roughly, are recognised: films which will "advance cinematographic art", films of "cultural" significance (as a rule, this is likely to mean adaptations of literary classics) and films which have a propaganda value for the government. The actual sums of money received by the producers are not generally disclosed, although it's known that under the old (pre-1959) system *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé* and *Gervaise* got 50 million old francs, *Le Beau Serge* and *Porte des Lilas* 35 million. In April last year, however, a socialist deputy asked a question on this subject, and the minister's answer revealed the full list of films to which advances were paid between January, 1960 and March, 1961. A total of 7,760,000 N.F. had been shared between 32 films—an average of 242,500

*France, of course, is not the only European country with some form of awards system; but the French method seems the most systematically organised.

N.F., or about £17,800, per production. Biggest grants were 750,000 N.F. to *La Princesse de Clèves* and *Le Voyage en Ballon*, smallest were 50,000 N.F., to *Les Années Folles* and *Vacances en Enfer*. In between, the titles included *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* (450,000), *Une Aussi Longue Absence* (300,000), *L'Enclos* (250,000), *Le Trou* (200,000), *Les Bonnes Femmes* (150,000), *La Pyramide Humaine* (150,000), *Un Couple* (100,000).

These sums are not enormous, but they do cut the element of risk. And the jury must obviously take into account not only their opinion of the picture's quality but also the kind of production investment involved: a £10,000 advance to a film costing £40,000 means more than a grant four times as large to a quarter of a million pound production. On this jury, made up of 16 people, are representatives of various ministries and official organisations—in our terms, the Treasury, Foreign Office, Central Office of Information, Board of Trade, etc. There are also a film technician, a director of production, and a group of eight people “chosen for their artistic competence”. These are: M. Jacques Audibert, Mme. Marguerite Duras, MM. Robert Kansters, Léon Mathot, Edgar Morin, Henri Queffelec, Raymond Queneau, Jules Roy.

The composition of the jury reflects that rather intimidating French respect for letters in general and the novel in particular. Translate into British terms (with no attempt to approximate name for name) and your committee might include such people as Mr. Graham Greene, Miss Iris Murdoch, Sir Michael Redgrave, Messrs. V. S. Pritchett, Richard Wollheim, Angus Wilson, Harold Pinter, John Wain. One would like, but can't quite imagine it. But the actual composition of the jury, and the way they interpret their function, is of course a key point. France calls in her novelists to ensure that bureaucracy does not have things all its own way; Britain could do as much.

No one, publicly at any rate, seems yet to have suggested that Britain might think of adopting a similar system for her feature industry. In its 1961 annual report, however, the National Film Finance Corporation did suggest just this with reference to shorts. The outlook for short film production in Britain, the report bluntly said, was “lamentable”, if one

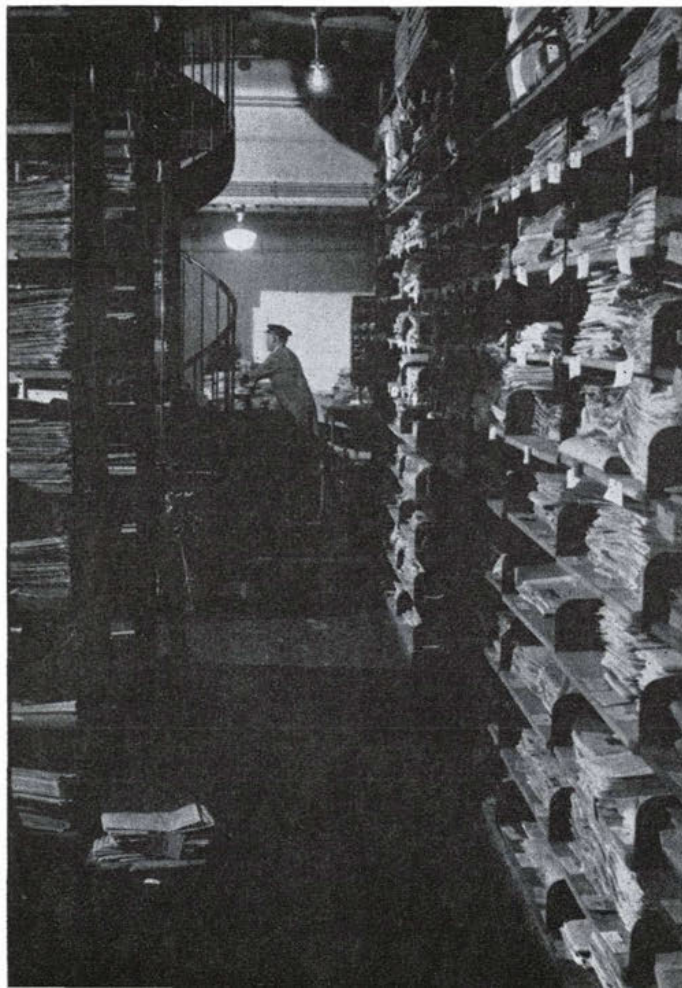
looked beyond the range of sponsored film making; and the NFFC saw little hope of a solution other than its own tentative suggestion of a prize system. The French have certainly recognised this need, and the system of awards to shorts survived the revised aid laws more or less intact. Prizes are scheduled to go to not less than thirty films a year. A short costs less than a feature, so that the prize will represent a larger proportion of the initial outlay; and the outlets for shorts, even in a country less addicted than we are to the double feature system, are still inadequate.

Looking back three or four years at the lists of French shorts given these “quality” prizes, one finds all the familiar names: Truffaut, Godard, Resnais, Malle, Franju, Reichenbach, Varda, Demy, Molinaro, Leenhardt, Rouch, Rozier. Feature directors did not materialise out of nowhere. They got their experience on short films, and they were able to do so because their government gave positive encouragement. If France had relied, as Britain increasingly does, on official and industrial sponsorship to sustain her shorts industry, can one imagine that there would have been any New Wave? I think not, and I think we can assume that movements like this, however spontaneous they may seem, arise from quite positive causes, linked as a rule to economic conditions.

Our attitude in this country is that the cinema is a big entertainment business whose occasional gestures in the direction of “culture” should be gratefully received. The French put things rather differently. “The system of advances . . . constitutes the expression of a policy of encouragement for quality production . . . State intervention in the film industry finds its justification in the concern to provide the economy of this sector (of production) with the means to bear without injury the constraints of art . . . A share of that risk which at present makes film production finance very burdensome should be taken by the state in the case of certain productions judged worthy of support . . .” This is the voice of official France. It is giving expression, one cannot but feel, to an attitude to the cinema which made possible the New Wave.

Is there any reason why a percentage of the British Film Production Fund should not go to the encouragement of quality? As the French recognise, film-making is a very expensive business, and the risk involved in *any* kind of feature which gets a few yards off the beaten track is considerable. The French system does not in any way eliminate risk: it simply reduces it slightly. It does not offer enough to encourage the cautious to take chances: it offers just enough to make the going a little easier for the adventurous. And it recognises that there are honours to be won other than commercially, that festival prizes do mean something in terms of prestige. One may subsidise Covent Garden and the Tate Gallery at home, and still be judged culturally abroad by *Carry on Nurse* and *Doctor in Love*.

One would like to see a sum of money made available each year out of the British Film Production Fund. It need not be a very large amount. Even £200,000 a year would be better than nothing, and if the sum were of this order the sacrifices made by individual producers from their present earnings would be relatively small. One would like a committee—including such people as painters, writers, critics, but not necessarily film critics, among its members—to view the films and allocate the advances. And one would like to see some of the money specifically earmarked for short films. This is an experiment which would certainly cost some individual producers some thousands, or tens of thousands, of pounds. It would not cost the public anything. The results might be considerable; they might not. But if something of this sort were tried, it could mean that the British production industry had grown into a new sense of responsibility.



Aid to short films: one of the scenes inside the Bibliothèque Nationale in Resnais' award-winning “*Toute la Mémoire du Monde*”.

MARIE SETON / SATYAJIT RAY AT WORK ON HIS FILM

KANCHENJUNGA

SATYAJIT RAY WAS planning a new film on a universal theme—the reactions of a husband and his family to his young wife's blossoming out into a successful career girl. The story is set in Calcutta. But having fixed the date to go on location, Ray was defeated in his search for a suitable girl to cast as the leading character whose personality expands in response to circumstances. It is his practice constantly to seek the exactly right interpreter, and he has an active drive to keep introducing unknown people in leading roles. Since the film would largely be shot in the streets of Calcutta, he said that to use someone already familiar, like Sharmila Tagore, would create additional problems with regard to onlookers.

Ray halted production plans and headed for Darjeeling to write an alternative scenario on a story of his own. He had already given the idea of a picnic subject to several writers, none of whom had produced the quality of story he was seeking. Distressed, for the cancellation of his systematic production schedule was, he claimed, demoralising to his unit, whose members of course are paid only when they work, he was determined to push through his new film. "It surprised me to find I could write dialogue," was Ray's comment on his script. "I didn't know I could . . ."

It frankly surprised me that Ray should think himself incapable of writing original dialogue, when he had shown so much discretion in writing the scenarios of all his previous films and had admitted that they were rather free transcriptions from the original novels and stories. In Darjeeling he had the help of his cousin, Dilip Bose, correspondent of *The Statesman*, and very rapidly the picnic idea changed and evolved into the story of a rich Bengali family on holiday. As soon as the setting for *Kanchenjunga* became Darjeeling, the idea of colour emerged. This has added 80,000 rupees to Ray's normal budget of 200,000 rupees. By October 27th, Ray and his unit (normally eight but expanded to 16) had returned to

Darjeeling to begin shooting. Three days later his American distributor, Edward Harrison, arrived on location; and on November 5th he signed a contract for the film's release on the basis of the shots he saw directed. On November 23rd the last shots were taken, the shooting schedule having been every day from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

In Satyajit Ray's view, *Kanchenjunga* differs from all his previous work: the story being his own, "the difference is between interpretation and creation." Of necessity, the structure is also different from his usual leisurely tempo, since the action is much tauter and covers only one-and-a-half hours on the last afternoon of the holiday—the duration of the film itself.

We had long had an arrangement for me to go on location. But when I heard from Satyajit that his new film was set in Darjeeling, I was astonished. All I associated with this British-founded town, not much more than a century old, was tea-growing and tea-planters. Although it is called "The Queen of Hill Stations", I couldn't visualise the attraction for Satyajit, who had shown no interest in what might be called Bournemouth types. It had escaped my consciousness that Darjeeling is but an odd sixty miles from Tibet.

It is no easy journey to Darjeeling from Delhi, or anywhere else, considering it can only be reached by going to Calcutta and then flying over East Pakistan to Bogdogra; or taking a long railway journey, skirting the eastern portion of Pakistan to reach the northern part of the present Indian state of West Bengal. The difference between the two journeys is ninety minutes versus thirty-six hours. Bogdogra on November 1st was a furnace-hot tropical plain with the lower ranges of the Himalayas etched mistily as the northward horizon. Luck put one of Satyajit's producers on the same plane with me, so we shared a taxi for the 62-mile climb up the mountain road to the many-tiered town perched on the 7,000 foot mountain. It

is watched over by Kanchenjunga, second only by a few hundred feet to Everest. Pale pink at dawn, Kanchenjunga usually turns yellow—"the colour of the gods"—at sunset, though the evening Satyajit shot it, the tone was dawn-pink.

* * *

Ray's film is a kaleidoscope of contemporary Indian life, from the nomadic Tibetans moving their packs of shaggy donkeys to Darjeeling's college girls in their drainpipe slacks, sneakers and brilliant knitted cardigans. Its focal point is the rich, Westernised Bengali family dominated by Indranath, chairman of six companies and a man entirely given over to acquisitive purposes. He has suppressed his wife's intelligence and talents; he has married off his elder daughter, Anima, to Shankar, a business man she did not and cannot love and to whom she has been unfaithful with the man her father prohibited her from marrying. Monisha, the younger daughter, is now to be married to the heavy-handed engineer who will benefit Indranath's enterprises. All his plans would probably mature, but for an accidental meeting with the unemployed, independent-minded Ashok, nephew of his son's former tutor. A highly civilised assault upon the citadel of Indranath's world ends with the business man bewildered, deflated, his values undermined.



The little girl, child of the unhappy elder daughter and Shankar, whose appearances on her pony form one of the film's recurring motifs.

"Indranath is not a villain in the conventional sense. He's highly cultured and civilised. He was given the title of Bahadur by the British and he looks back to those days with longing. I had Chhabai Biswas in mind when I wrote the character," said Satyajit. "It calls for a professional actor to develop nuances and sustain the dialogue." Biswas is the Bengali stage actor who also appears as the two obsessive landowners in Ray's *Jalsaghar* and *Devi*. His wife is played by Karuna Bannerjee, the mother in *Pather Panchali*. Had Ray's methods of direction changed at all since his first film, I asked her one day? She thought a moment, then said: "I don't know. The only thing I notice is how much more certain he is today of what he is going to do . . ."

In selecting a player—professional or non-professional, for a major or minor role—Ray ignores proved ability to act. For example, Arun Mukherjee, who plays the crucial role of Ashok, was acting with a semi-professional theatre company in Calcutta. But Ray had no interest in seeing Mukherjee on the stage, since he considers that a theatre performance is no criterion of an effective screen interpretation. Mukherjee has

turned out to have a captivating screen personality, lending Ashok the necessary dynamism to explain his influence upon the girl Monisha, her mother and Indranath himself.

For the subtle character of Shankar, the elder daughter's husband, Ray persuaded the union leader Shubrata Sen, whom he had heard speak at a dinner, to take the part. The heroine, Monisha, is played by a Presidency College girl, Alokanda Roy, whom Ray heard of from a friend. He virtually decided upon her from a photograph, then persuaded her rather unwilling parents to let her act. Her father says he finally agreed because "of the respect middle-class Bengalis have for Satyajit Ray." Mr. Roy told me that since so much of Indian middle-class life is dull and routine, he wanted his daughter to have an exciting memory to carry through her life. Alokanda said she would never act in another film. That, of course, remains to be seen.

Watching Satyajit Ray from day to day direct such diverse people, including an English planter as a tourist, a Nepalese beggar boy who subsequently became the unit's mascot and went to work, and a blind beggar, as well as all of the cast, one can see how much he depends on his ability to give people the confidence to act. He is patient and intensely enthusiastic. His most frequent exclamations to his unit and actors are "Fine!" "Wonderful!" One day, when Anubha Gupta (Anima) and Shubrata Sen had played a very emotional scene to its climax, Satyajit burst into applause, supported by the hundreds of onlookers who followed us around the town.

* * *

The shooting script of *Kanchenjunga* begins with a carefully drawn map of Darjeeling's Observatory Hill, with its focal point of The Mall, to which all paths lead and on which all the people of the town converge. There are seventeen numbered circles on the map, each marking a location. The only location away from the Hill is the teeming market on the lowest level of the many-tiered town. This is near the impoverished quarter where Ashok and his uncle live. So Ray has linked the bottom of the town to the top through the movement of his characters.

As the action develops, each pair have their own special location—except for Ashok, who traverses the town from the bottom to the top. Indranath's route is from the elite hill-top hotel, the Windamere, to the Mall, where much of the action is set. Anima, her husband Shankar and their only child are first seen in the holiday cottage of the hotel—the Snuggery. But the grim scene of their marriage break-up is set against the background of the charming children's park overlooked by the church with its glistening spire.

Scenes in which Monisha has to choose what she will do with her life are worked out on the long road on the opposite side of the Hill. Her scenes with Ashok are played on the wooded part of this road and shot in dappled sunlight. But her scenes with the engineer are set on a barer section of the road, with a vast and magnificent view of the Himalayas. These episodes were shot in the afternoons, and the white, swiftly drifting mist characteristic of Darjeeling in October and November became an integral part of their emotional content.

Anil, the playboy brother, also has a special location to reflect his preoccupations—the roof café of the dairy products establishment of Kaventers, where the young socialites of Darjeeling come to sip bottles of chocolate milk overlooked by the exclusive Planters' Club. Far below, and appearing in some shots, is the market. Against this background, Anil's drainpipe set look terribly cute. Clothes play an important part in Anil's sequences. Ray found two college girls to cast as his girl friends, and they appear in the black slacks and vivid cardigans which first attracted Ray's attention. Anil is played by Anil Chatterjee, the professional who plays the Postmaster in *Three Daughters*. He had been supplied by Calcutta with a pair of natty trousers for his playboy role. But these were not quite smart enough to stand up to the local girls' slacks, so an appeal was made to a Darjeeling tailor who in twenty-four

hours turned out a more dashing pair in silver-grey corduroy. The girls and he parade the brightest colours in the film.

The colours in clothing, which appear so casually introduced on the screen, were as carefully planned as every other detail. The foreground action of all the main characters was sketched into the shooting script shot by shot, so that Satyajit came on location each day with the most thoroughly planned schedule and a very accurate idea of how much could be accomplished. This is a unique procedure in Indian film production, where scenarios are generally sketchy in the extreme and subject to last-minute alteration. On one day, with five different locations and all equipment hauled by hand up and down hill for half a mile or more between each, 2,000 feet of film was shot. Ray estimated that this would represent 900 feet when edited. He neither wastes a minute nor a foot of film.

Few directors, however, pay greater or more patient attention to details. In one shot of the film, Shankar is sitting at the foot of a tree smoking a cigarette; Satyajit wanted to convey the atmosphere of autumn and the despondency of Shankar's mood, and his symbol was a leaf falling from the tree. But the leaves were stubborn and would not fall. Shaking the branches did not help. Finally, one of the assistant directors climbed up the tree to aid nature. The shot, a medium close-up, contained a short dialogue passage. The assistant had a handful of leaves and dropped one at the start of the words, a second in the middle of Shankar's line and a third when he stopped speaking. Ray declared that the second leaf was a distraction, and the shot was taken again with only two falling leaves. It is a shot in which the harmony in colour and every detail is clearly defined.

Ray's creative methods fuse two contrasting lines: his long-considered and planned composition and movement, and the speed with which he can improvise a background action or bring an additional movement into a shot, from an inspiration accidentally coming to hand. This is illustrated by what happened in the case of Scene 8, Shot 141, which had been rehearsed in the terraced garden of the Windamere Hotel with Chhabai Biswas and Karuna Bannerjee. Mitra, the cameraman, was just about to take a shot of the couple walking down a flight of steps towards the road.

Suddenly Satyajit saw an English tourist couple coming up the steps; and immediately he decided to bring them into the shot, walking towards the camera and passing out of frame. It was all re-arranged so quickly that it gave the impression of an accidental intrusion. For the next shot, the camera was carried halfway down the steps, to be tilted upwards as the main characters descended towards it. As Ray viewed the composition, he noticed two other hotel guests watching on the terrace above. These two were in sharp contrast to the first couple, and they appeared at the top of the frame. Satyajit sprinted up the steps calling to them: "If you keep on talking you're all right! Don't move!" He turned to me and said with much enjoyment, "I'm getting a wonderful international cast!"

His quiet, unaffected confidence and charm helped him to win many such immediate responses. One afternoon, while mist was drifting swiftly (exactly as it was desired), and after a number of shots had been taken, I turned away and caught sight of a great spray of pink-mauve tree dahlias hanging with grace against the background of mist. I said to Satyajit, "Look!" He started to run down the hill shouting at the top of his voice, "Wonderful! Camera! Camera! Hurry!" The crew chased down. Satyajit kept urging, "Really, really wonderful! Close-up!" Working against time, for the mist was moving swiftly up the valley, two shots were caught before the mist vanished and the vast outline of the Himalayas reappeared.

A long shot of the Mall sums up Ray's talent for endowing a highly planned scene with naturalism. There are two or three such shots. In one, with a medium close-up in the foreground, Satyajit marshalled a number of people to take part—several onlookers; his wife and sister-in-law; his American distributor; myself; three old Tibetan men with coral and



The film's "grimmest scene", in which Shankar and his wife face the failure of their marriage.

turquoise earrings; a group of little schoolboys; and the local ice-cream man. When we saw the unedited rushes, this shot looked entirely unpremeditated. But in fact, although the movement was improvised on the spot, the actual pattern of movement had been thought out very carefully ahead of time. There were two takes, with a slightly more formal pattern worked out for the second.

Darjeeling reflects the cosmopolitan character of modern India; and Ray's film—"like all my previous films," he says—concerns the old and the new. Indranath belongs to the past, despite his power in terms of the present. Cynicism and opportunism have played, and still play, a role in Indian life and history. Ashok, who is a modern man, is also of ancient spiritual lineage, in as much as the line in Indian thought and action which has always brought about regeneration depended upon those who snapped their fingers in the face of material power. This is the climax of Ray's portrait of a prosperous family. Ashok, earning his five hundred rupees a month from free-lance teaching, has the power of character to disturb and deflate Indranath with his millions.

The implication of the last shots of the film is that Indranath has somehow been routed by this attractive young man with his optimistic confidence in his own standard of values. Suddenly, it seems that Indranath has lost his grip on his family, whose functioning, like that of the companies of which he is chairman, he has manipulated without feeling for so long. They have failed to meet him at the appointed time. He is left alone, surrounded by the world's most eternal and mystic landscape. He moves out of the last shot calling to his vanished family . . .

Ray and two of his cast rehearse the roof-top café sequence.







**KATHARINE
HEPBURN**

**LONG DAY'S
JOURNEY
INTO NIGHT**

Directed by Sidney Lumet and photographed by Boris Kaufman, "Long Day's Journey into Night" has been filmed in New York for a new independent company set up by TV producer Ely Landau. Lumet has already directed a television version of "The Iceman Cometh" for Landau, whose company has acquired screen rights to several of Eugene O'Neill's plays from his widow. Katharine Hepburn plays the mother in "Long Day's Journey", with Ralph Richardson, Dean Stockwell and Jason Robards, Jr. Photograph by Dennis Stock of Magnum.



LOUIS MARCORELLES **CONVERSATION WITH**

JEAN RENOIR

CAN I BEGIN BY ASKING A QUESTION ABOUT YOUR NEW FILM, *Caporal Epingle*? *What subject have you chosen for it?*

I didn't choose it, someone put it up to me. I didn't know the story, but after reading it I thought it was a subject that suited me very well, one I could feel at home with. It's like *La Grande Illusion* in that it's a story of escape, though naturally with all kinds of differences. The fact that it's an escape story interests me in itself, because one enjoys repeating oneself, returning to the same sort of framework and finding the variations in it. Of course this is an entirely different film from *La Grande Illusion*: the action takes place in 1940 and that means it belongs to another world.

What do you feel the differences really are between the two periods—between 1915 and 1940?

Well, twenty-five years amounts to a generation. And the great turning point, of course, was not the last war but 1914. The people of the last war come after the turning; the people of 1914 were still riding towards it, quite unaware that any turning point was coming. The characters in *La Grande Illusion*—Boieldieu and Maréchal and Rosenthal—would be amazed if anyone told them, "You know, in a few years these ideas about nations will have disappeared. There will be no more nations." They might understand perhaps that there would be social change, a merging of classes—there's enough talk about that in *La Grande Illusion*. But it would never have occurred to them that the world could be politically divided

in a different way . . . And money is shared out differently, so that the people in charge are different people, belong to another race. Europe in 1914 was still in the hands of the politicians, even if they were already servants of the great industrial and financial interests. Now politicians have ceased to count for much: we're in the age of the organisation men, the planners. Wasn't the 1939/45 war above everything one of organisation? It was really organisation—in the factories as much as on the battlefield—that defeated Hitler.

About social themes: in La Grande Illusion, La Règle du Jeu, La Marseillaise, and I think also in Diary of a Chambermaid, you're showing us a society divided 'horizontally'. Do you think that the attitude in La Règle du Jeu, for instance, is already out of date; that there aren't any longer these rigid class divisions?

Of course nothing is ever fixed or absolute. And I really feel that the distinctions one establishes in one's own mind are only valuable because they help one to understand what's going on around one. I don't think they represent anything final . . . I often try to work out why I've adopted certain theories, which seem fairly arbitrary, and I usually fall back on the comparison with speed. Drive in a donkey cart down a narrow lane, with the trees practically brushing past you,

Above: François Truffaut and Jean Renoir. A meeting on location during the filming of "Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe".

and you can have the illusion of fantastic speed. Record it on film and it looks wonderful. But if you're sitting in an aeroplane, judging your speed by the time it takes the sun to move behind some object on the ground, you might as well be stationary for all the sense of movement you have. You need standards of comparison to measure speed; and I think it's rather like that with theories.

Yes, but I believe you've never cared much for general theories. All I meant, simply, was that if you were to return to La Règle du Jeu today, you might see it rather differently.

Well, I don't know about its value as a film, but I do feel that *La Règle du Jeu*, like *La Grande Illusion*, is a sort of reconstructed documentary, a documentary on the condition of society at a given moment. And of course that society is very different now. External reality is often the expression, the symbol, of an interior truth, and I suppose that even in their clothes people are now all pretty much alike. Certainly it's difficult now to distinguish between a Boieldieu going to the theatre on a Saturday and a Maréchal doing the same thing. There are differences, naturally, but they're much more subtle, more interior, and they're gradually being wiped out. It's possible that between Boieldieu's son and Maréchal's there may be no difference. It's extremely possible.

National barriers and class barriers may be breaking down, as you say, but we live in a world with two great divisions—East and West. Do you think we can establish real co-existence? Do you see any breaking down of these barriers?

Yes, up to a point . . . I believe implicitly in the Tower of Babel, and I think all those stories like the one about the Tower of Babel, with which ancient history is dotted, are not meaningless. The stories may be symbolic, things didn't happen just as they've been narrated, but stories like this are all really getting at the same point: the tendency for humanity to come together. Politically, this is the history of the world—the history of the Roman Empire, and of all the later attempts to reconstruct the Roman Empire. At the moment, obviously, the world is split in two; and I suppose that the barriers are real ones, though my instinct tells me that they're not. We may be part of an intermediary period, when really big divisions—there are several in the world, after all—are going to replace the old swarm of small nations. But the unifying forces exist too, above all in the way of living and in the coming together of languages. It isn't even always an international thing, after all. It wasn't so long ago, for instance, that when an Italian theatre company from Rome played in Turin the audience couldn't understand the actors. But now, with radio, television, the cinema, they've invented a kind of standard Italian. I must say I regret it. It's just like England, that boring English of their radio and television.

A Fellow Feeling with the English

I think there's a movement now in England, though, to get away from this, for actors to use their local accents. Do you know England well?

Not at all well, but what I do know is in a family kind of way; through family connections. I adore England and I'd like to live there: people live there very agreeably.

*I've heard some Englishmen say that *The River* is one of the most authentically English films ever made. So you must have a certain fellow-feeling with the English.*

Oh, really it's very simple. My sister-in-law is English, so I do know a bit about English family life.

What about the English cinema? The English have no equivalent, for instance, to our own New Wave, the breakthrough of young directors filming independently.

Yes, but things don't happen simultaneously in all countries.

After all, the game was really opened by the neo-realists in Italy, and it wouldn't surprise me a bit if the English were to come in and give us something absolutely unexpected . . . Look, for instance, at the way English life and habits are changing. I can't stand the kind of literature which likes to over-simplify national differences—you know, the English are so cold, the Italians are warm, the Germans are heavy. But of course there are national characteristics: the climate, the way one eats, the way people move about the streets, the fact that traffic goes on the left—all this does add up to something. A few years ago, English manners depended on tremendous restraint; they didn't break the ice themselves, and they respected the ice that formed around other people. Lately, though, in one hot summer I've seen English journalists behaving more like Neapolitans than the Neapolitans themselves. I remember one session at the Savoy Hotel in London, where in five minutes we were all drinking, shouting, bullying each other. It was a lot of fun, and it wasn't at all like the conventional image of England.

It seems to me a pity that there isn't more of this freedom, this letting rip, in English films. The English cinema is so very respectable.

It's very, very respectable, but sometimes it's found in that respectability a kind of genius . . . The terrible thing about the cinema is the way it uses up everything. It exhausts ideas, stories, brands of stories, and suddenly it finds itself faced with a kind of gulf, a ditch across which it must leap to capture some new and absolutely unforeseen territory. We're not talking, obviously, about eternal masterpieces: clearly Shakespeare always had something to say, and he didn't have to jump any ditch. But it's a situation ordinary film production is likely to run into every five years or so. In France the New Wave has been lucky enough to jump the ditch. In England the same thing could happen.



"Le Caporal Epingle": Jean-Pierre Cassel and Claude Brasseur.



Pierre Renoir as Maigret in "La Nuit du Carrefour".

English cinema has always been best known for its documentarists, people like Grierson and Flaherty. Do you think a move might come from that direction?

Oh, it's all a question of people. New movements come into existence through certain people—in France through the *Cahiers* group, the Cinéma-thèque. In England the documentary movement was created by a particular group, around Cavalcanti wasn't it? Cavalcanti played a big part in English documentary.

Well, what do you think about documentary in general, about its importance to cinema?

Of course it's important because it's the only school that exists. If there were any other way for young directors to get a start, well, I don't know . . . It isn't that documentary is the only possible school theoretically, but in practice it amounts to the only one, and I don't see how a young director can begin in any other way. In any case, it's the way most of our own directors of quality have begun. Look at Resnais, for instance: his documentary studies of painters enabled him to enter into direct contact with certain problems.

To get back for a moment to England . . . You probably know about the group who've been called the Angry Young Men, and the importance they attach to the idea of commitment—the feeling that cinema and theatre ought to reflect and criticise the society around them. Last Sunday, for instance, I was talking to an English critic who'd just seen Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*, and who said that he found it quite unimportant because "it's not a committed film." This seems to me a bit ridiculous, because from Truffaut's point of view of course the film does have a commitment. I'd like to know what the word means to you.

Well, of course it has a meaning. But I feel about this word "commitment" or "engagement" as I do about most general ideas: they take on value only when they move to the particular. You're driving along, and you see a very poorly dressed man limping down the street: do you take him into your car or don't you? This is a commitment, isn't it, of a very precise

kind? But as to commitment in a general sense . . . You know I can't believe in the general ideas, really I can't believe in them at all. I try too hard to respect human personality not to feel that, at bottom, there must be a grain of truth in every idea. I can even believe that all the ideas are true in themselves, and that it's the application of them which gives them value or not in particular circumstances . . . No, I don't believe there are such things as absolute truths; but I do believe in absolute human qualities—generosity, for instance, which is one of the basic ones. Truffaut's film is a good one, in my opinion, because it has this generosity. Of course it has its faults, but these are failings with which I sympathise. I sympathise egotistically, because they are exactly the failings of my own last films, exactly the same . . .

Freedom, Discipline and Imagination

Have you entirely given up your activity in the theatre, or do you still mean to go back to it from time to time?

I haven't given up anything. It's just that things turn out in a certain way, and lately I haven't found anything in the theatre that really catches my imagination.

I seem to remember that about three or four years ago you were quoted as saying "I've said almost everything in the cinema: I find a kind of freedom in the theatre . . ."

In the theatre there is greater freedom because there is discipline. The awful thing about the cinema is the possibility of moving about exactly as one wants. You say, "Well, I must explain this emotion, and I'll do it by going into flashback and showing you what happened to this man when he was two years old." It's very convenient, of course, but it's also enfeebling. If you have to make the emotion understood simply through his behaviour, then the discipline brings a kind of freedom with it. There's really no freedom without discipline, because without it one falls back on the disciplines one constructs for oneself, and they are really formidable. It's much better if the restraints are imposed from outside.

Do you feel that the cinema now—that's to say, with its ultra-mobile cameras, portable sound equipment and all the rest of it—gives you almost the same freedom as the theatre?

For me there's one very interesting demonstration, a kind of open door, and that's François Reichenbach's films. To get the quality of expression, of sound and vision, with the means he employs . . . I think it's tremendously important.

I believe you've worked with a good deal of freedom on your own new film. Was it shot in a studio or on location?

Mostly on location. Very little studio.

Did you work on it alone?

No, because with this kind of subject . . . Isn't there always this old problem of external reality? Of course I'd like to be someone like Chaplin and get away from it completely, but



"French Can-Can": Philippe Clay, Jean Gabin, Françoise Arnoul, Gaston Modot.

I'm not strong enough for that. I try, quite often, and the attempts usually go adrift; and I know really that if I have some slight contact with external appearances, this helps me to penetrate more deeply to the interior of the characters. I knew something about the lives of prisoners of war, but not directly, not first-hand. It happens that there's a very talented director, Guy LeFranc, who was a prisoner himself and for whom the subject means something very special—like the Bible for a believer. I asked him to help me, and he's given me this sense of first-hand knowledge.

I believe you've kept on with the techniques of your recent films, Dr. Cordelier and Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe. Does this mean shooting with three or four cameras simultaneously?

Generally three. And we've mostly recorded direct sound. There's nothing dubbed in the film—oh yes, there is one scene, a short one, where it was raining so hard that you couldn't hear the words.

When you're using this number of cameras, does it make difficulties in the editing, in matching shots? Are there different light levels, for instance?

No, we take all that into account. I'm working with Renée Lichtig, the same cutter who helped me on *Dr. Cordelier* and *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, and she's used to this sort of juggling about. In fact, with this method of shooting, the editing becomes essentially a matter of selection and assembly. I'm not faced with a mountain of film which can be so reconstructed in the cutting that something which started out as a comedy can end up as a tragedy.

What struck me about Dr. Cordelier was the extraordinary freedom your methods seemed to give the actors.

Here too, I hope, here too. I haven't used the identical technique, because the subject doesn't lend itself in the same way. Not all subjects do . . . I can't see Jean Rouch, for instance, going off to make one of his African films with half a dozen cameras. He obviously needs one camera, and needs it in exactly the right place. But there are no theories, no general rules. All one can say is that with some scenes and subjects it's an unbeatable method. You get this freedom for the actors, and you get a kind of emotional progression.

But I suppose you have to rehearse very carefully just the same?

Of course, you always have to rehearse; and you rehearse even more thoroughly when there are several cameras, in order to pin down an emotion and even quite simply to follow through on physical movement. It is easy to lose time on this business of matching shots, even when you're just trying to match physical continuity. You take a close-up, and then comes the medium shot which is to follow it in the montage, and which is filmed the next day, and everyone on the set is asking "Was he like this; wasn't his voice sharper; no, not at all, it was less sharp . . . I promise you it was exactly like this . . . I had my elbow bent just this way . . ." And then the cinema finally becomes a job for the continuity girl, and then a job of composition and inspiration. For myself, I'd really rather call a truce to all these problems and shoot the scene in one go.

In A Bout de Souffle Jean-Luc Godard is trying to get away from the standard editing devices, the artificial linking shots and so on, to use a much more fragmentary kind of montage. What do you feel about this?

Yes, yes, it's excellent . . . But I must tell you that I don't really bother much about linking shots, physical devices to link action. The thing that counts as far as I'm concerned is the emotional link. I feel that the development of thought and feeling in an actor is indispensable—at least to my kind of film. I don't see how I can expect to establish a relationship with an audience if I don't manage to give it continuity of emotion through a character.

Throughout your career, I suppose, you've always referred back to realism, however many forms it's taken.



"The Diary of a Chambermaid": Paulette Goddard, Judith Anderson, Francis Lederer, Irene Ryan.

With constant efforts to escape, since realism annoys me. But it does help me to divine just a little of the interior truth, which is the one vital thing. In effect it has to do with knowing what someone is really like, what stuff he has in him. Then, once one has got at him, one has to make the audience see it too . . . But, you know, everyone really only makes one film in his life, and then he breaks it up into fragments and makes it again, with just a few little variations each time. There's one so-called quality that's more overrated than almost any other: imagination. I've just been writing a book about my father, and I'm delighted to find that he felt this too. He really detested imagination: he thought it was the greatest possible hazard for the artist.

Because it's too capricious . . .

No, not that. It's simply that my father was a modest man who didn't believe that his inventions were important enough or varied enough to concern the public. He thought that the artist's proper function was to absorb material, to digest it and to pass it on. The form didn't matter: it could be Picasso's cubist form, or Mondrian's abstracts, or his own figurative technique. But he didn't believe in the idea of man as God, able to create out of nothing. He really subscribed to that text by Lavoisier which you must know: "In nature nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything is transformed . . ." Well, there you are.

Films to Reach Everyone

A few years ago, I believe you were quoted as saying that directors ought to be able to make films for art-house distribution, that there should be more of these cinemas throughout the world and that production could be financed through this kind of distribution. Do you still feel like that?

Yes, but it's still an ideal, an intention, rather than a fact. I think something like this will happen, and I'm encouraged by the increasing number of different types of cinema. Cinema, for instance, clearly doesn't attract the same audience as the one which goes to the Publicis Cinema to see Truffaut's new film. These are two entirely different kinds of enterprise. . . . When I say different audiences, though, I ought to stress that I don't necessarily mean different people: of course every

human being is potentially a member of all sorts of audiences, depending on whether he's feeling in the mood for Wagner or for a music-hall.

I was talking recently to Truffaut on this subject, and he said that he didn't want to make films just for specialised audiences, that he wanted his films to reach everyone. I think he's a little ahead of his time, because I can't see Jules et Jim doing the same kind of business as The Guns of Navarone. But I'd like to ask you about this question of contact with the public.

I can only give you my own opinion, and I rather think I agree with Truffaut. You must make films to reach everyone. If you don't, you split up into your little private groups, you become pretentious, and in my view you lose the sense of what the cinema is really about. It is, essentially, a mass art; and we must accept that, we must take it for what it is. I don't believe that in our age the differences between the various forms of expression are so great that we need to try to bend one form to ends which aren't proper to it. You know, the cinema becomes a mass art simply because of the distribution system: there is a negative, or maybe several negatives, and you take whatever number of prints you want, and there you are. We wouldn't have to talk about a mass art if there were only one copy of each film. Anyhow, if you want to practise something that *isn't* a mass art, heaven knows there are plenty of other ways of expressing yourself!

All the same, as you've said, different films do appeal to different audiences. Do you think this is something for the business men to sort out—to fit the film to the market—or does it mean that directors should consciously make films with certain audiences in mind?

Naturally, it's firstly a matter for the business men. But there's another reason why the situation is quite different from what happens in the theatre. A playwright can write for a certain actor—Giraudoux for Jouvet, say—in the assurance that his work will reach the public. But there's no reason for a film director—for tomorrow's Truffaut—knowing that the Publicis audience has taken kindly to his film, to say to himself, "Well, I'll make another film which will come out at the Publicis . . ." But why not? It would give the artist a wonderful feeling of security. In fact the only harmful thing about our job is this fact that it's commercial. We are obliged to please too many people, because it's the condition of the job. If you start out with the idea of pleasing everyone, however, of course you end up satisfying no one. One has to start with the idea of achieving a certain objective, uncovering a certain truth, and if the mass public accepts it, so much the better. One makes films for them.

I suppose there are likely to be more and more different kinds of films, and perhaps a more widespread diffusion of films. Do you think there is also going to be more room for individualism?

There will be more specialisation, I suppose. There's no reason why entertainment shouldn't move in the same direction as the rest of life. When I was at college, for instance, one either read science or the humanities; one did Latin or one didn't! The division stopped there. Now there's a frantic kind of forced specialisation, and the subjects which students have to absorb are so complex that they are forced to select, to limit themselves. It will be the same in entertainment, the same in everything.

Do you think that the cinema has absorbed part of the theatre public?

No, I really feel rather the opposite . . . I see our age as one of great specialisation, as I've just said, particularly in the professions, but in some ways we're moving away from specialisation, for instance in the field of technique. If I have worked in the theatre, it is only because technical development is such that at the moment a director is not exclusively a film director . . . When I started out in films, you know, the director had to do almost everything himself. He practically developed the film himself; and of course it was tremendously

exciting. Then all these technical preoccupations shut us up in our own little world, just as the old-time craftsmen were enclosed in the world of their particular craft. A man who made barrels, for instance, would never have thought of making tables: he had too much to learn about his own craft. Now you make a barrel with a machine, all in a few minutes, and since you can make a table just as easily, why not have a table as well? The New Wave directors know their craft; but there are a tremendous number of directors around who know absolutely nothing about the technical problems of their job. They really haven't the first idea about photography, or about what happens when you develop a film, or about sound recording. The director simply comes along and says "I want such and such a scene," and the technicians do it for him. So people now have their general ideas, their artistic ideas, and the artisan has given way to the artist. And this is something to regret, because great art is made by artisans and not by artists.

Then you can't be very enthusiastic about the Hollywood tendency towards super-spectacles, bigger and bigger films?

I enjoy watching some of them. But I get far too much pleasure out of doing the odd jobs on a film to want to get tied up in an undertaking where one becomes a kind of general, with a whole staff at one's disposal. The general doesn't have any fun; the really entertaining thing is to be a corporal giving riding lessons to half a dozen men, teaching them how to hang on to a horse. That's where the fun is.

A Club for Discontented Europeans

You worked in Hollywood for some time, and might go back there. Were you as free and happy as in France?

But of course!

You obviously like America a lot. What is it that you get from it particularly?

Oh, many things . . . Americans may be less subtle in their attitudes than Europeans, but they're also less bitter. In America you can still sit in a shop and have a chat with the grocer's boy about the development of the local bus service or about pre-Columbian art, or whatever it may be. It isn't so easy in Paris. Try to interrupt your butcher by chatting to him while he's chopping up the cutlets . . .

Are you irritated at all by the American emphasis on technical perfection?

Certainly not, because I have a great regard for good technique. I've spent my time in France bullying the laboratories to get better results, I've always tried for perfect camera movement . . . The danger for America, as I've said, is that everything becomes so perfect the director doesn't have to know anything about technique at all. But I despise technique—despise it while I'm working, I mean—because I really do know it. And if you don't know it all, I don't see how you can expect to make first class films.

Quite a long time ago, in some interview or other, I believe you mentioned a director called George B. Seitz, who had worked with M-G-M on the Andy Hardy pictures. I think you quoted him as a case of an artisan who really knew his job.

Yes, perhaps. I'll try to tell you what I had in mind. I believe that the dangerous thing in a director's career is to make films which earn a lot of money. After a really big box-office success, people turn their backs on you, they don't want to suggest films to you, you're out. But have a good flop which has cost millions, and people love you, they fall over themselves to get you to work for them . . . It really isn't a paradox: it's true all over the world. Now, I gave as an instance the case of this gentleman who directed the Mickey Rooney pictures, and who kept Metro rich for years. I wanted to know the name of this director, and no one could even tell me who he was. Well, here is this fantastic thing: here is this man who earned more money for the cinema than almost anyone you can think of,



"La Bête Humaine": shooting Gabin's leap from the train in the studio, with back projection screen.

and no one even knew his name. Isn't that proof, if you want it, that money doesn't count in the cinema?

I know you've always had a great sympathy for the American cinema. Was Stroheim someone you admired particularly?

Yes, yes. A great character.

You cast him in La Grande Illusion, and when you were making Nana I believe that you were . . .

Naturally I thought of him. He was a great influence.

And do you feel about Stroheim that he was someone who helped to bring together European and American trends?

Oh, he was like all the Americans: there are very few Americans who are really American and nothing else. Take someone like John Ford, with all his Irish sentimentality. Or take Chaplin, who's an American artist whatever he likes to say, but whose films would have been quite different if he hadn't been born in England. My feeling is that America hasn't yet achieved a complete fusion, that the melting-pot hasn't worked completely. America is still a club for discontented Europeans.

I believe you're now an American citizen.

I'm both French and American. And of course I have an American family: my mother's father was American—at least he emigrated to America—and I have all sorts of American relations.

Painting for Other Painters

I'd like to ask you about one last subject: about critics. It seems to me that in a sense criticism is an impossible job.

It's a very difficult one. I try to put myself in the place of the critic.

And being a critic makes you want to make films yourself, because the more you put the questions, the less clearly you see the answers. You want to take a hand in the thing yourself.

That was my father's idea. Given that painting isn't, as Truffaut says of the cinema, a mass art, my father insisted that finally one was painting for other painters.

But what do you expect yourself from a critic? Is there anything he can give you?

That depends on the critic. A man like Bazin, for instance, gave a lot, but probably this was not only through his criticism but through what emerged from his writing as a whole. He had a kind of vision of the world shaped by the cinema, and what he wrote went beyond criticism. In fact the criticism was secondary, and I think this is true of most really good critics. When a critic simply writes that a film is good or bad . . . well, anyone can make mistakes.

Do you think criticism can play a really constructive part? Do you feel, for instance, that the influence of Cahiers du Cinéma has been a constructive one?

I believe that modern critics have helped towards the formation of certain trends, certain groups in the cinema. The cinema today isn't the creation of *Cahiers*, but obviously *Cahiers* has done quite a bit towards it. And that's all to the good.

Today we're experiencing a certain reaction after the first enthusiastic response to the new cinema. What do you think about that—is it an unfair reaction?

It's all extremely unimportant. The New Wave came, and after it there was bound to be a counter-reaction. It was

(Continued on page 103)

Richard Roud

NOVEL NOVEL; FABLE FABLE?

Is it still possible to write novels . . . ? The answer, it seems to me, is certainly not yes and perhaps, tentatively, no. I mean real novels—not fairy tales or fables or romances or *contes philosophiques*, and I mean novels of a high order . . . I ought to make it clear that these distinctions are in no way pejorative; I do not mean “novel good, fable bad”, merely “novel novel; fable fable”. When people nowadays tell you something is “not a novel”, as they are fond of saying, for instance, about *Dr. Zhivago*, it is always in a querulous tone, as though someone had tried to put something over on them, sell them the Empire State Building or Trajan’s Monument or the Palace of Culture when they know better; they were not born yesterday. That is not my intention . . . MARY MCCARTHY (*Partisan Review*, Summer 1960).

THE DEVELOPMENT of the novel and that of the film as art forms are more closely parallel than one might imagine. Over the past sixty years, the cinema has undergone an evolution similar to that of the novel in its history of some 200-odd years. If one takes the mainstream of narrative cinema, one can see a development counterpointing that of the novel which can most conveniently be expressed in tabular form.

DEFOE

The primitives of the cinema: they appealed to their audiences in the same way as the early novelists (within their limited technical means, of course) by presenting stories purportedly true, or at least events and characters purportedly real.

FIELDING, DICKENS

Griffith and the American cinema of the Twenties: more elaborate fictions, laced with sentimental indulgence and moral uplift; more complicated narrative techniques than those of the primitives. (c.f. *Bleak House* and *Intolerance*).

BALZAC, DOSTOIEVSKY

Stroheim and Pabst: greater freedom in choice of subject matter; greater psychological daring; greater power and brutality.

ZOLA and THE GONCOURTS

The Italian neo-realist movement.

HENRY JAMES

Antonioni.

Parallels like these are obviously neither tight nor exhaustive. They leave out the un-comparables (Welles and Flaubert) and the non-narrative cinema: Eisenstein (epic, not narrative); Dovzhenko and Vigo (poetry, not narrative); Dreyer and Bresson (allegory or fable).

That the novel and the film should display such connections is not surprising if one considers that their popularity as art forms proceeded largely from the same sources. With the advent of bourgeois culture in the eighteenth century, and with the fillip given to universal education by Protestantism, more and more people began to learn how to read and, equally important, to have time to read. And so literature was faced with a growing audience capable of reading but not sophisticated enough to read, say, *Hero and Leander*, *Arcadia* or *Euphues*. For it takes a more educated perception to read a poem or a romance from which the relevant human significance must be deduced than a realistic tale which can always be regarded simply as a story of what happened to real people. Defoe, Richardson or Fielding can be read purely for the narrative: Sidney, Marlowe or Lyly cannot. *Birth of a Nation* can be enjoyed purely as a story: *Hiroshima mon Amour* cannot.

Recent developments in the cinema can best be understood by considering what course the novel has taken since Joyce (or

was it Henry James?) killed it. True to that principle of alternation which underlies the history of all the arts, the novel went back to those literary forms which prevailed before its birth. In *Ulysses*, Joyce returned to the epic; in *The Castle*, Kafka returned to the fable, the allegory. Others, according to a no less general principle, turned to non-novelistic forms: Virginia Woolf, in *The Waves*, to the introspective poem; Alain Robbe-Grillet to the world of the painter, the description of appearances.

* * *

In the cinema, the move from the novel to the fable goes back, I would say, to Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1944/45), although I am sure one could find earlier examples—cases might be made out for *La Règle du Jeu* and for *L'Atalante*. But *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* provides as good a starting point as any other, and consideration of it will help to pinpoint the differences between the novel and the fable. The novel, briefly, means what it is about. In a good novel, emotion is expressed by finding (to use Eliot's words) a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which will be the formula of that particular emotion. Artistic inevitability, says Eliot, lies in the complete adequacy of the external to the emotion. The feeling of dissatisfaction, of something baffling about the film, experienced by critics and audiences at the time *Les Dames* was first shown proceeded, I think, from the fact that the plot of the film and its theme—what Bresson is saying—are not objectively correlated. There is an enormous difference between the story (the apparent subject) and the theme (the real subject).

The apparent subject of *Les Dames* is a not very believable intrigue, adapted from Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste*, about how a woman connives to make her former lover marry a prostitute in order to revenge herself on him. The real subject is the triumph of love over hate: love can create, hate can only destroy. Why does Bresson choose such a simple and not very interesting plot to express himself? The answer is, presumably, that he does not want us to get lost in the labyrinth of the well-constructed plot, he does not want us to become so involved with lifelike and identifiable-with characters that we will fail to grasp the more general aspects of his theme. Furthermore, the choice of a deliberately artificial plot allows him to "eliminate anything which might distract from the interior drama," as he himself declared. The whole *mise en scène* of the film is not subjugated to an expression of the plot or a pointing up of the story; plot, theme and form are related, but in a much more complex and interesting manner. The whole becomes equal to the multiplication of the parts, not to their sum.

Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne is now a "classic", but Bresson's most recent film, *Pickpocket*, has not been properly appreciated, to my way of thinking, even in the pages of SIGHT AND SOUND. And this is because it has been judged according to criteria which were based implicitly on the aesthetic of the nineteenth-century novel. But other aesthetics exist; others have existed. Although the novel has dominated our culture for over a hundred years, it is an historical fact whose beginning can be situated and its end posited.

In his review of *Pickpocket* for SIGHT AND SOUND, Eric Rhode ultimately found himself forced to reject the film because Bresson never made it clear just why the hero, Michel, became a pickpocket:

What in fact is the weakness which drives him to an adventure in theft for which he was not made? Recent



Paul Bernard and Maria Casarès in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*; Lucia Bosè and Massimo Girotti in *Cronaca di un Amore*. Strongly influenced by Bresson's film, Antonioni's first feature reminds one in its subject matter (guilt and the power to destroy) of Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove*. But, as in James's later novels (*The Sacred Fount*, *The Golden Bowl*), plot and character development are subservient to the moral fable. One could say even that the moral fable itself is subordinated to form, were it not that on this level form and fable, morality and aesthetics are one.

sociological and psycho-analytical knowledge should give us some idea, but Bresson seems indifferent to these findings. Disturbing overtones suggest he isn't conscious of them at all . . .

If Bresson's film had been an attempt at a novelistic character study, a realistic depiction of people, then this criticism would perhaps be damning (although one doubts whether "recent psycho-analytical knowledge" is absolutely indispensable to the artist). But Bresson has, I think, made it quite clear that his film is not realistic, that it is, in fact, a non-realistic allegory or fable. As Michel descends into the same (disused) tube station for the tenth time and rides back and forth on the same tube line over and over again in the company of the same extras, he says, "I always took



The realistic setting and the deliberately anonymous performance. Martin Lassalle in "Pickpocket".

care to vary my trips, first taking one line and then another." This seeming inattention to detail in so meticulous an artist as Bresson can only mean that he is not in the least interested in a realistic texture. Nor should he be, given what he has set out to do. He is not interested in psychological realism either. Michel's lines about his two years in London ("I lost all my money on gambling and women") are almost unbelievable coming from those ascetic lips. One might almost say that Bresson needed an excuse to bring Michel back to Paris—and any excuse was as good as another.

Properly speaking, Michel is not a character at all. The actor Bresson chose to play him does not even try to act the role; his delivery and his face come as close to anonymity as possible. Like Matisse, who in his chapel at Vence carefully left the faces of the saints blank so that the faithful might read into them anything they wanted or were able, so Bresson has purposely made Michel as vague and as unparticularised as possible. Michel is the sinner, the man who is trying to find salvation and redemption. His friend, Jacques, attempts to help him, but Jacques' way is that of good works, which are not sufficient in Bresson's theology. He offers him sound advice, jobs, bourgeois morality. But these are not enough for Michel—nor even for Jacques, for his way of life does not prevent him from abandoning Jeanne and the child she has had by him. Even Michel's thefts can be interpreted as an attempt to *snatch* salvation: the first and last thefts we are shown take place at race-tracks; Michel is trying to profit by the luck (grace) of those who have won.

But neither Jacques' secular wisdom, nor Michel's efforts to attain grace by stealth, are of avail. Nor are Michel's endeavours at mere respectability, when he returns from England and settles down in a job to support Jeanne and her child. The hound of heaven follows him still, and even he realises that he must be caught before he can be free. And so he *lets* himself be caught. But even penance is not sufficient; Jeanne represents the force of love, and it is only through her that Michel finally achieves grace.

Mr. Rhode found *Pickpocket* inferior to *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé* because in the earlier film a similar theme was treated realistically, "or enough, anyway, for it to make sense on a literal level." This is quite true; *Pickpocket* does not make sense on a literal level. Presumably Mr. Rhode, deceived by the fact that the screen is (usually) a realistic medium and by the realistic setting of *Pickpocket* (Paris exteriors, no studio work), assumed that Bresson's intentions were realistic. *Pickpocket*, however, has much closer links with *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* than with *Un Condamné*. *Les Dames*, as we have seen, is also an allegory; and its plot is hard to take in any literal way. Both films are sufficiently non-realistic and de-personalised for us to be free to interpret the problems they pose in our own terms. What interested Bresson in these films was the road to redemption, not the particular scenery along that road. "Recent psycho-analytical knowledge" might attempt to tell us that Michel's sin is homosexuality (this idea has been advanced in many quarters), but I think this would be to miss the point. This interpretation is certainly possible, but Bresson leaves us free to substitute any temptation to evil. "The ability to make the necessary connections" is not to be found in *Pickpocket*, to be sure; we must make them ourselves.

The same is certainly true of *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*: we must make the connections. In Resnais' earlier *Hiroshima mon Amour* there was a split between apparent and real subject. But the apparent subject, the plot, was "interesting" enough and complex enough to make the film more easily palatable to those whose aesthetic bias demands a world of logical relationships. The characters were sufficiently personalised (the heroine at least) for the viewer to be able to take the story straight, even while he may have noticed that there was something else going on in the film besides the account of a rather neurotic young woman of "doubtful morality" whose unfortunate wartime experiences had branded her for ever.

In *L'Année Dernière* Resnais and Robbe-Grillet provide no such crutch. It is difficult (though not impossible) to identify with a woman called "A" or a man called "X". Resnais' treatment of the setting leaves one in no doubt that this is a different world from, say, that of Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel*. In fact, the deliberate thinness of the plot, the lack of incident, the absence of any explanation of the characters' motivations, or even any placing of the characters, has led some critics to dismiss the film as the triumph of form over content, as a purely abstract (read *cold*) work with nothing to say. *L'Année Dernière* was reviewed in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, so there is no point in going into it at any great length here, except to make the obvious observation that it has gone further than *Les Dames*, *Pickpocket* or *Hiroshima* towards the fable. One now understands just what it was that Resnais saw in Visconti's *White Nights*: with all its flaws, it too was an attempt to capture the sense of wonder, the timelessness of the non-contingent world of the fable. Far from finding *L'Année Dernière* trivial or chilly, I think it is one of the most emotional films ever made; but the emotions are stirred not only by the characters or their predicament but also by a total response to the work of art which none the less does have a meaning. Surely love, the interaction of past and present, freedom and bondage are not unimportant as subjects? As important as—unblushingly to use an Aunt Sally—whether a man gets his stolen bicycle back or not.

One need not go on about Robbe-Grillet and the *nouveau roman* to justify Resnais' use of an unrealistic and unmotivated plot. The same thing can be found in a play like Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*. It is an allegory (actually a

restatement of the Persephone myth), an allegory of redemption, like *Pickpocket*. In fact a comparison of certain recent French films with some of Shakespeare's romantic comedies and tragi-comedies is more fruitful than one might at first imagine. The French fascination with America can easily be paralleled by the Elizabethan intoxication with an imagined Italy. Both are equally unrealistic: Italy and America are seen at once as impossibly evil (the Circes of the Nations) and as glamorously alluring. They both provide distance, stimulus and an escape from realism (c.f. *Tirez sur le Pianiste*, another misunderstood and underrated film).

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Resnais and Bresson are important enough directors to be assured at least a modicum of serious attention. Even when a critic dislikes *Pickpocket* or *L'Année Dernière*, he is generally respectful enough to couch his rejection in serious terms. But the problem of critics' criteria when confronted with a fable was really brought out at last year's London Film Festival. There were two outstanding "comedies" in the Festival—*Lola* and *Il Posto* (*Une Femme est une Femme* belongs to no genre). Both films were well received, but it is enlightening to compare the reactions. By and large, *Il Posto* was preferred (even, alas, by the British Film Institute, in awarding the Sutherland Trophy). I submit that this was mainly due to the fact that *Il Posto* was the kind of comedy critics tend to treat respectfully because it is satire, because it criticises certain social conditions, and above all, because it is realistic. It had a plot which could be taken seriously. And yet it seems to me that *Lola* lies smack in the middle of the really great tradition of comedy—unrealistic, contrived, yet moving—like *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* or the tragi-comedies of Euripides. An important work of art in spite of—although this is begging the question—its plot.

Like Shakespeare's comedies, *Lola* has a basically simple plot. Lola is a dancer in Nantes; her lover left her seven years ago to make his fortune; he returns to marry her, thereby disappointing another young man who has since fallen in love with Lola. This basic story line is delightfully complicated by a number of parallel and subsidiary incidents which have been described by Jacques Siclier in a recent number of *SIGHT AND SOUND* as attempts to tell the story of Lola's whole life without using flashbacks: the past and future, as it were, continuously present through the use of parallel situations. I do not really see it this way myself; nor, I am happy to say, does the director, Jacques Demy. For one thing the parallels do not always work. For another, as in poetry, the connections are made metaphorically: they are not precise equivalents but analogues, and hence all the more telling.

Lola is, like *As You Like It*, a fable about the different kinds of love. Just as in *As You Like It* we have the Phoebe/Silvius relationship, that of Touchstone and Audrey, Celia and Oliver, and Rosalind and Orlando, all of them different but complementary views of love, so in *Lola* the subject is love in all its manifestations: Roland/Lola, Lola/Michel, Cécile/Frankie, Frankie/Lola, Roland/Mme. Desnoyers, etc.

"One understands just what it was that Resnais saw in 'White Nights' . . ." Marcello Mastroianni, Jean Marais and Maria Schell in the final scene.

Guillaume Apollinaire

"Adieu faux amour confondu
Avec la femme qui s'éloigne
Avec celle que j'ai perdue
L'année dernière en Allemagne."

One of the chief joys of *Lola*, as of most fables, is in watching the mechanism work itself out, slowly, ineluctably, and above all elegantly. Demy has found visual equivalents to the formal pattern of verse in prose in the Shakespearian comedies: "I will help you if I can, I would love you if I could, I will marry you if ever I marry woman, and I shall be married tomorrow."

Gracefully and effortlessly, scene balances scene, shot counters shot until the complications are resolved into the most elegant of cotillions. And yet there is nothing fusty or old-fashioned about the style of the film. For all its dedication to Max Ophüls, there is nothing of the gauzy appeal to the past. *Lola* is resolutely contemporary; the photography by Coutard is bright, sharp, and in the café scenes formal, even approaching the abstract. Except for Lola's night-club, the El Dorado, the locations are airy, cool and simple*. But from the fluid and occasionally audacious camera movements, the welter of chance meetings, resemblances, coincidences, and the elegance of the choreography, there emerges a kind of truth—the most important kind, the truth of the emotions.

I am not saying that *Lola* is as great a work as *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It*, but only that it is the same kind of work. Demy has used a complicated, illogical fable which has allowed him to create a film in which he can treat his subject—love—as fully and as widely as possible. He has also, on his own level, solved an important problem. He has provided an interesting story—everyone loves a good story—and yet he has kept it sufficiently at a distance for him not to become restricted by it in any way.

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The principle underlying the basic aesthetic of the nineteenth-century novel was that it should deal realistically with recognisable characters who behaved in a logical manner. A

* Here again, as with *Pickpocket*, the realistic trappings of *Lola* led some critics into assuming it was a naturalistic film. This ambivalent approach put off many; to others it constituted a large part of the film's appeal—the constant tension between real and unreal, a dialectic whose synthesis was achieved by the film itself.



world was created by the novelist, but a world of logical relationships, and one based on rationalist thought, the thought of the novel's greatest period of development. And many still feel that the summit of art is achieved when what the novelist wants to say finds expression through a watertight story—one in which the characters' actions and destinies can be explained by psychological, economic and political reasons. Coincidence can only be allowed if, like garlic, it is used sparingly. As any guide to novel writing will tell you, no character can die unless he has been shown to be dangerously ill, suicidal or addicted to hazardous sports. We can all remember that the greatest objection to *L'Avventura* was that Anna, whom one had taken to be the principal character, disappeared after twenty minutes of film and was never heard from again. As Jung put it, there is no legitimate place in the rationalist world for invisible, arbitrary or so-called supernatural forces. We distinctly resent the idea of these forces, he continues, for it was not so long ago that we made our escape from the frightening world of dreams and superstitions and constructed for ourselves a picture of the cosmos worthy of rational consciousness.

In the past twenty or thirty years, rationalism has undergone a severe testing; world events have shaken the beliefs of many in progress; existentialism (both the Danish and the German as well as the French kind) has insisted on the irrationality of man. England and America have held on the most tenaciously to rationalism, at least on the conscious level, but they are learning that neither tranquillisers nor good old common sense can buy off the Furies. The irrational can only be placated by a just and due recognition of its existence and a modicum of respect. "The rationalism of the Enlightenment will have to

recognise that at the very heart of its light there is also a darkness," writes William Barrett.

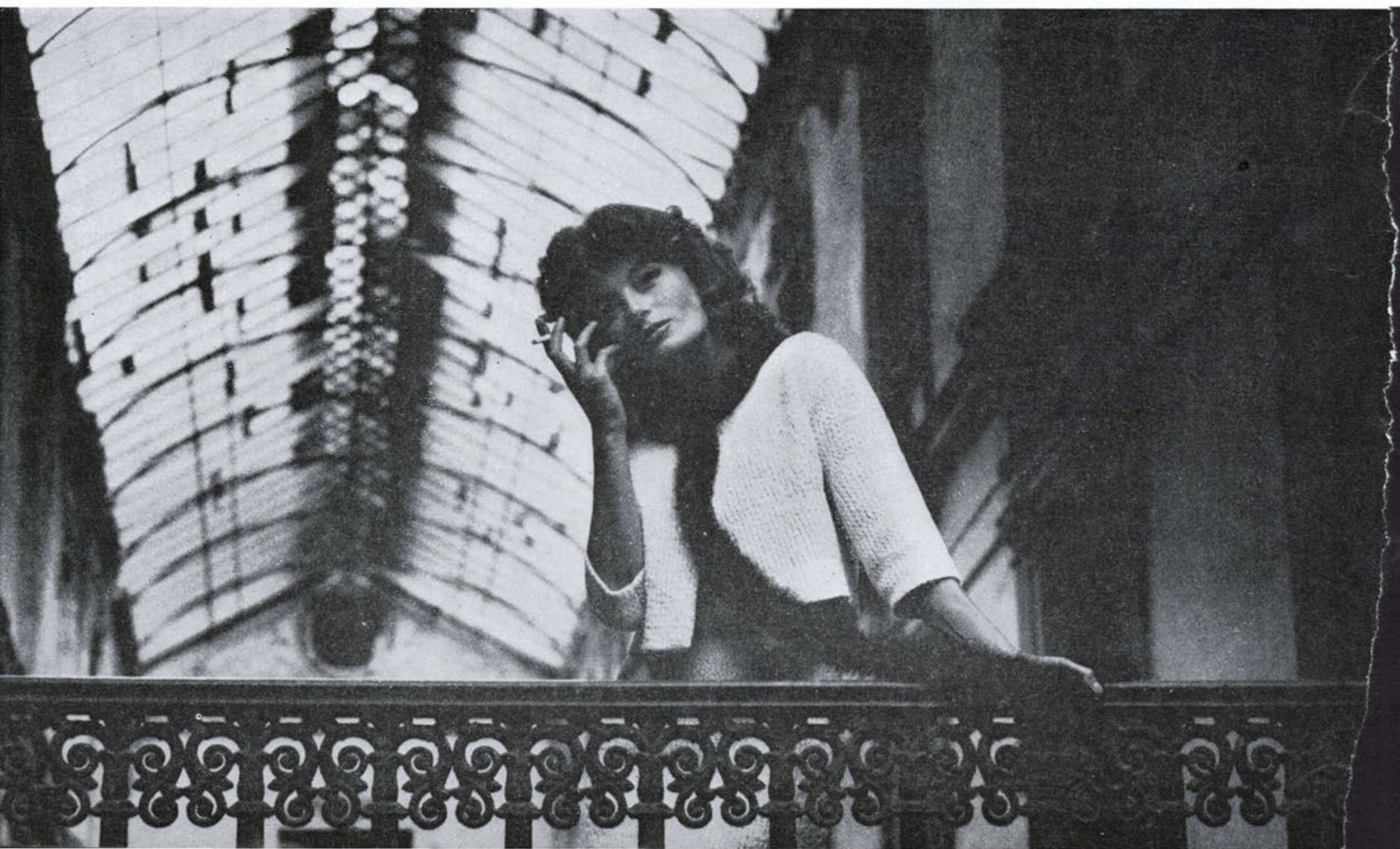
Hence the fable is perhaps the art form most suited to our time. It recognises the irrational elements in life: the importance of coincidence, of chance and the gratuitous, of luck (or, as Bresson would call it, of grace); the ever-present possibility of death (accidental or otherwise); and it is thus more lifelike and more real than that literature which goes under the name of realism.

No less important, however, is the fact that the fable frees the film-maker from the obligations of story-telling as such, just as painters were absolved a hundred years ago by the invention of the camera from the duty of reproducing reality and were able to follow other and more dangerous paths. Of all the films I have discussed, *L'Année Dernière* is the best example of what this new freedom can bring. If ever there was an example in the cinema of the completely integrated work of art, this is it. Image, sound, dialogue, music, camera movements, are all autonomous, interacting one with another to create patterns of extreme complexity and brilliance. And this was possible, I submit, because plot was, so to speak, kept in its place. Just as thematic material in music or subject matter in painting never dominates the work as a whole, so Resnais and Robbe-Grillet have never sacrificed to their plot the other elements which make up a film.

I am not trying to say that this is the only way to make a great film. *La Notte* is living proof to the contrary—although even there . . . What I am trying to say is that *Ulysses* can no more be judged by the same criteria as *Père Goriot* than *L'Année Dernière* can be by those applicable to *Greed*, *Toni* or *The Tokyo Story*.

Anouk Aimée in "Lola":

" In the very temple of Delight Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine."—Keats' "Ode on Melancholy".



ARLENE
CROCE

NEW YORK LETTER

THE ROOT PROBLEM FOR New York film devotees continues to be the non-availability of the new and even not-so-new foreign films. A cultural lag exists in films where—presuming an equivalent demand—none would be tolerated in book-publishing, art exhibition, theatre or the concert hall. As if to compensate for our comparatively imperfect knowledge of world cinema, a critical attitude is developing in which apologetics take the place of informed evaluation and reputations are elaborately justified on the basis of what little evidence we have been supplied. This happened last year when the long-unknown Visconti made his belated appearance with *White Nights* and *Rocco and His Brothers* (previously his one American release had been *Bellissima* almost a decade ago). We had seen enough of Fellini to dismiss his caricatures in *La Dolce Vita* as such, but Visconti's in *Rocco* were greeted with superlatives.

This situation will continue until supply and demand are better co-ordinated, but in some ways it can't be helped. New York does not have a film festival, a Cinémathèque, a National Film Theatre or any agency where audience preferences can be tabulated away from the market-place. Perhaps more than any of the world's great cities, New York depends on the backwash of festival favourites to bring choice selections within reach; but the official channels are often so blocked by legal and fiscal complications that any honest distributor (one, that is, who doesn't complain that American audiences aren't "ready") can pretty well quiet the enthusiast who doesn't understand why we don't see every important new film as a matter of course. The Museum of Modern Art, apparently unable to organise independent sessions of the Unseen Cinema, can co-operate when export-eager sponsors make it financially possible, as in its Japanese, Polish and Yugoslav series. Both the Museum and Cinema 16, the largest of American film societies, have helped to promote Wajda and Satyajit Ray, but the effort seems to have been exhausted on the Warsaw and Apu trilogies respectively. Distributors continue to be cautious even though it's no longer news that local audiences are as ready as continental ones.

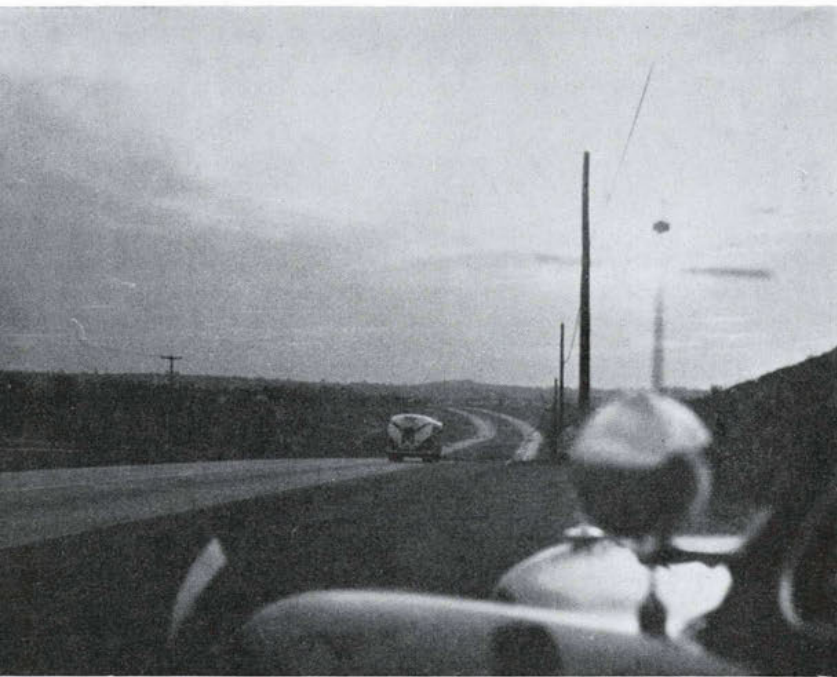
Of course popular taste, or somebody's idea of it, makes a difference. Taste, as we're often told, isn't transferable: a summer of Bergmans doesn't mean we'll swallow Bresson or Antonioni in proportionate amounts. (It isn't the loss of Bresson's *Pickpocket*—by even the most charitable estimates, no go at b.o.—that tears our hearts, but the steady denial of

Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, still unshown in America after seventeen years.) Antonioni's reputation, for years a by-word on the continent, was made locally with one film, *L'Avventura*, but nearly a year will have elapsed before the second Antonioni release, in this case *La Notte*. Last spring, *Le Amiche* could have been glimpsed without subtitles in an Italian neighbourhood cinema in Queens; more recently it was shown on the lower East Side, augmented by a taped English translation. Apart from that, the advent of this master is still a legend (a fact that hasn't prevented his being talked to death in the critical reviews).

Among the younger Italian directors, Zurlini, Monicelli and Bolognini are beginning to be known, and of the three Bolognini, with his febrile sexology suiting exactly the current local mood, looks to be the newest sensation. The big hit of last year was of course *La Dolce Vita*, chiefly a triumph of publicity. Publicists, in fact, appear to dominate the New York foreign film scene as never before. With insinuating logic, Vadim's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* followed *Dolce Vita* in a roadshow engagement at a Broadway theatre conveniently named the Henry Miller. For apparently the same reason, we get to see Ichikawa's *Odd Obsessions* (*Kagi*) but not his *Conflagration* or *Burmese Harp*. Clearly, somebody can afford to operate on the notion of transference.

To paraphrase Antonioni, eroticism is the disease of our cinema. The one relief art-house patrons get from it—if relief is what they want—is provided by those uniquely non-erotic Soviet films so brilliantly scored by Pauline Kael in the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND. If films are imported merely as entertainment, then surely the laws ought to function the same for Bondarchuk as for Bardot... or if as dutiful exchange, the same for Bondarchuk as for Bresson. From Miss Kael's reading of art-house fantasies, it may not be imagined that relief at the hands of the Soviet Union, with or without the State Department's imprimatur, is not avidly sought, and she quotes the *Dolce Vita*-disillusioned to prove it. Miss Kael is so perceptive in other parts of her article that I wonder why she accepts as worthy of debate the inference that the residual moral of the Soviet films is Strength through Puritanism. I agree that American Puritanism would not affect "our power position in this nuclear age." But American Pacifism would and that, I submit, is the hoped-for reaction. Miss Kael accurately defines the message of the Soviet films: "Russians are really nice people, very much like us, only better"; but she misses out on the political correlative: *so why would they want to destroy us?* Poor Congresswoman Granahan's energies might be better employed in an investigation of the "cultural" exchange that permits entry to these absurd films and that also countenances the plans recently announced by Lester Cowan and Mosfilm for an American-Soviet co-production of *Meeting at a Far Meridian*, Mitchell Wilson's book about a Russian girl in love with an American atomic scientist. Is this the package we have all been waiting for—simultaneous relief from sex fatigue and nuclear strain?

All this would seem to contradict a received idea, cherished among liberals, that a significant number of foreign films are barred from U.S. screens for political reasons. This idea, based on a few known or surmised instances of proscription, not only doesn't account for the Soviet films, which are "straight" propaganda (that is to say, the propaganda is oblique—the Russians export no other kind); still less does it account for the fact that most of the non-Russian foreign films we see also come from the Left. As Miss Kael has now raised the outstanding matter of *Hiroshima mon Amour*, I would like merely to append the following note: a young socialist I know told me the "key" to *Hiroshima mon Amour* was the heroine's crypto-Communism; hidden even from herself, it was the one clue to her identity her Japanese lover could not give her. No use protesting that this could only be one more ambiguity in a richly ambiguous film. "Well, you know," was the serene reply, "we have all the best films."



Edouard de Laurot's "Sunday Junction", one of the experimental films shown by the Charles Cinema.

The problem of whether New Yorkers are going to get to see all the films they read about may well be happily resolved in the next few years. New cinemas are being planned and old ones refurbished. In Manhattan the demolition of the Roxy and two of Loew's neighbourhood colossi coincides significantly with the imminent construction of no less than four "art" theatres. The foreign film market, recently expanded to include the new Carnegie Hall Cinema, will soon embrace a second house to be built by the Carnegie's operators, the F and A Theatre Circuit, plus additional cinemas owned by Walter Reade, Rugoff and Becker and Harry Brandt.

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Meanwhile, audience tastes are steadily emboldened by the enlightened policies of two of the newest revival houses, Dan Talbot's New Yorker and Lionel Rogosin's Bleecker Street Cinema. The New Yorker, indeed, is so enlightened that it will let patrons choose its programmes. The third part of its ongoing "Forgotten Film" cycle was recently devoted to two weeks of double bills selected by David Vaughan in illustration of what he called "my personal attitude towards the art of the film." The gesture was not whimsical, but critical and combative; the intention was to force a literal showdown between the two warring schools of cinematic thought. "If Part II of the Forgotten Film represented what seemed to me a rather unquestioning acceptance of the critical 'line' of *Cahiers du Cinéma*," wrote Mr. Vaughan in his programme notes, "Part III, if you like, shows the influence of the *Sequence 'line'*..."

Something like a third force in this controversy is represented by the Charles, a newly reactivated cinema just below 14th Street now being run by Edwin Stein, Walter Langsford and Jonas Mekas. It was the Charles which rescued *Le Amiche* from oblivion. While it intends to do similar justice to any noteworthy undistributed (and usually, therefore, unsubtitled) films it can get hold of, its main concern is to become the showcase of the "new independent American cinema." The Charles' Midnight Film Society has already begun to establish itself in that capacity; it has screened the work of Richard Preston, Stan Brakhage, Stan

Vanderbeek, Richard Wingate, Robert Downey, Jerome Hill, Ed Bland, Lewis Jacobs, Robert Breer, Marie Mencken, Gregory Markopoulos, Nicholas Webster, Rudy Burckhardt and Joseph Marzano. Some of these have been around for years and shown abroad, others are just beginning. Some are documentarists or polemicists, some do animated abstracts or collages, some are poets, still others just camera-fiddling fantasists or organ-grinders. The Charles gives a roof to them all. A measure of its determination to encourage independent film activity is its "open house" policy: a film-maker can have his work screened any time during the day when the theatre is not being used, and one evening recently an extraordinary marathon screening jag was held to which press and public were invited along with any of the local cineastes who wanted to exhibit ("price of admission: a regular ticket or a can of film"). Films of all descriptions, long or short, finished or unfinished, were admitted, and projection continued until the supply was exhausted.

Among many of the new film-makers here the feeling is intense that cinema is having a new birth of freedom in America. But there is little objective evidence to support the feeling. None of the new feature-length films by Frank, Brakhage, Mekas *et al* has yet been able to find and hold an audience on a commercial basis. Shirley Clarke's *The Connection*, a test case in the view of many, has been refused a licence by the state censors on the somewhat extra-cinematic grounds of verbal obscenity and cannot be shown in New York State. Peter Kass' *The Time of the Heathen*, a war story of the Pacific shot on Long Island, has been bought by British Lion for a London opening, thus continuing a market trend initiated by *Shadows*.

Apart from the question of commercial breakthrough, there is the profounder question of what this new cinema is about. No consensus exists as to the kinds of films that should get made, and opinion is quite sharply divided on the new French directors and theoreticians whose work has helped so remarkably to change the atmosphere. The one common denominator is the immemorial desire, as the phrase immemorially has it, to make films unhampered by commercial restrictions. If there is a strong crusading spirit, there is no "movement". Despite the colourful publicity, it is still too early to speak of new waves or new schools of American cinema. Even the assumption that such manifestations are desirable may be erroneous. The best work that has been produced tends to confirm the theory that American artists do not work well *en bloc*. Beat Poets, Abstract Expressionists, Modern Dancers—and some of the Film Experimentalists—seem all to aspire to the condition of jazz: variants blown by a collective impulse. What is real in jazz is only, in other arts, a Parnassian ideal based on would-be social phenomena and thus, for Americans, unnatural. (Even the *Group Theatre* had to stress the fact.) The native tradition has always been isolation, eccentricity in the exact sense of the word. If a new American cinema is to be, it will emerge from that tradition.



Stan Vanderbeek's "A la Mode", or "An Attire Satire".

FILM REVIEWS

FIRES ON THE PLAIN and ODD OBSESSIONS

THE UNCERTAINTIES OF distribution mean that it is hardly ever possible to see the films of certain directors in chronological order; as far as Japanese cinema in general is concerned, the gaps are quite enormous, with virtually nothing known before 1950. In the case of Kon Ichikawa our knowledge is confined to four films: *The Burmese Harp*, *Conflagration*, *Odd Obsessions* and *Fires on the Plain*, only one of which suggests his former pre-occupation with bizarre comedy; yet together they reveal a highly contemporary artist tormented by a particularly fiery private hell. Perhaps it is symptomatic that two of the films are concerned with war; as with other Japanese directors of his generation (Ichikawa is 46), memories of the war and the shattering implications of the defeat were inevitably carried over into the post-war period. Certainly, *Fires on the Plain* (Compton Cameo) recalls the conflict with ferocious immediacy: no film has recorded the physical and mental degradation of an army in retreat with such obsessive zeal. And yet, as we follow the tubercular Private Tamura, an outcast from his unit, in his terrible journey across the Filipino plains, Ichikawa maintains such a rigour and discipline that the physical horrors appear inevitable and quite without gratuitous sensationalism.

Against a marvellously photographed background of green hills, little valleys and rain-soaked forests, we are shown men reduced to animalism, tormented by hunger, delirium and finally cannibalism. A panic dash across a river is defeated by American tank fire, culminating in a shot of bodies spreadeagled against the earth like broken puppets; lines of soldiers are strafed and fall and only a few rise again; others die slowly in water or propped against trees, muttering strange incantations. The controlled bravura of these sequences is contrasted with a delight in moments of fleeting pleasure: a man sinks his aching feet in a mountain stream, a tear of satisfaction rolls down a soldier's cheek as he tastes salt again, Tamura gazes with surprise at a man who is *alive* and is also smoking

This harsh realism is reflected in the characterisation. No cheerful, comic soldiery here; the Japanese army is shown as sly, greedy, treacherous and uneasy about the consequences of surrender and defeat. This laying bare of a national psychosis stems, of course, from the original novel by Shōhei Ōoka, who was himself taken prisoner in the Philippines. The adaptation, by Natto Wada (Ichikawa's wife) is extraordinarily faithful to the original except in one important respect—the ending—and it is here that the film seems to falter most. Ichikawa shows Tamura stumbling off across the plain in search of a place "where people live normal lives." As one is never sure if he survives or not, the effect is of a sudden snuffing out, a bleak end to a brutal story. But Ōoka's epilogue describes Tamura's experiences in a mental hospital, his meditations on the meaning of his experiences, his awareness of a God whom he believed guided him, and his moral victory in never knowingly eating human flesh. The omission of these final thoughts gives a clue to the film's limitations: by concentrating on so much of the book's surface detail, Ichikawa has blurred the strange poetic and spiritual implications of his hero's odyssey.

Curiously enough, this kind of mood was present in *The Burmese Harp*. There is one montage sequence in *Fires on the Plain*, showing Tamura moving through a field of corpses, which immediately recalls the earlier film, yet the feeling is not recaptured. This deliberate emotional detachment is part of Ichikawa's method, and in some ways his strength. When the young boy sets fire to the temple in *Conflagration* we understand his motives, although his innermost personal feelings are kept at a respectable distance. This kind of reticence is common to both Japanese film and literature, but in



"Fires on the Plain".

Ichikawa's case Western influences can also be found in both his style and visual methods. Yet, in *Fires on the Plain*, it seems to me that Ichikawa's attitude towards his hero's experiences is finally too literal and constricted. Although played with considerable nervous intensity by Eiji Funakoshi, the film's Private Tamura lacks the feelings and responses to be found in Ōoka's original. Ichikawa has given us an authentic vision of hell in what is, by any standards, a remarkable film; nevertheless, it is a pity that he was not able to show his hero's catharsis on the other side of the inferno.

The little family group featured in *Odd Obsessions* (made, incidentally, in 1959, the same year as *Fires on the Plain*) suffers more sophisticated torture in a film which again reflects Western literary influences, a tragi-comedy which might well appeal to Sartre and Cocteau. This is a difficult picture for any audience (even the Japanese seem divided over its meaning and merits); for a Western audience used to French and Italian studies in sexual *mores*, its swiftly fluctuating moods make interpretation additionally hard. Again adapted from a novel (as are most of Ichikawa's subjects), the script plays a cat-and-mouse game with the audience as we watch the desperate attempts of its central figure—an ageing art historian—to rekindle his sexual fire by making himself jealous of his wife's infidelities. Abnormal mental states are invariably present in Ichikawa's world, but instead of swerving away from them or reaping obvious box-office capital he somehow manages to make them seem compatible with his characters' needs and environment. As cannibalism was the ultimate human degradation in *Fires on the Plain*, so potency injections and manufactured excitements are the only way out for the lecherous yet pitiable husband in *Odd Obsessions*. Less inevitable are the plot machinations which spring from the central situation and some of the visual symbols which accompany them. Trains being coupled together after a scene of love-making are at least original, but laughable in the wrong way; similarly the inexplicable ending, during which most of the remaining characters poison each other off, seems to belong to another film.

It seems likely that Ichikawa was strongly attracted by the formal

possibilities offered by this subject, for as a piece of film-making it is even more meticulously wrought than *Fires on the Plain*. Using a CinemaScope format and an unusually subtle lighting and colour scheme, he makes the house in which most of the action occurs a protagonist in the drama. As the camera scrutinises figures appearing round half-dark doorways, follows the characters along winding corridors or cuts furtively from one conspiring face to another, sickness and perversion become almost tangible and style and content interchangeable. Whilst extracting exactly what he required from his cameraman, Ichikawa is less successful with some of his players, although Ganjiro Nakamura and Machiko Kyo as the husband and wife both possess the enviable Japanese quality of inner stillness, and the ability to build up characterisation from the inside.

JOHN GILLET

AMERICANS IN EUROPE

I BELIEVE THAT NO NAME was ever coined to describe a certain category of film, immediately recognisable, which reached its peak of popularity during the Fifties but is by no means extinct today. These movies send one or more American characters to Europe (usually Italy) and pay as much attention to the glamorous places they visit as to the personal adventures of the travellers. They are always in colour and tend to be long; the title often inspires a tune (or is it the other way round?) which is sung over the credits. The prototype was *Three Coins in the Fountain*, which included as many as three innocents abroad; David Lean's *Summer Madness* was a slightly more pretentious product of the same genre. Such films usually find their original inspiration in novelettes or matinee plays, but three recent examples have developed from more distinguished sources. Elizabeth Spencer's *Light in the Piazza* is a well-written conte, "sensitive" but never sentimental; *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, Tennessee Williams' only novel, has that baffling mixture of poetic invention and hysterical melodrama which in varying proportions characterises all his writing; *Tender is the Night* is a work of art—some might claim, a masterpiece. Yet in the cinema all three have been degraded to the same level of animated travelogue—fairly enjoyable films, no more.

The most serious degradation is, of course, that of Scott Fitzgerald: but more could have been made of the other two books as well. In *Light in the Piazza* (M-G-M) Olivia de Havilland and Barry Sullivan play an American couple with a beautiful daughter who, at twenty-six, has remained mentally and emotionally at the age of ten. Her mother accompanies her on a trip to Europe, where their stay at any one place is liable to be interrupted by the girl becoming innocently but dangerously involved with some young man; the father talks, with sad exasperation, of sending her to a "home". The story shows, with some subtlety, how the mother manages to marry the girl off to a young Italian who is madly in love with her, and how the secret of her backwardness is preserved. In this silly, sensual, superstitious society, where rich young married women are allowed to be interested only in film stars and food, the daughter's childishness (so sinister in America) is easily accepted as harmless simplicity. The situation is fiercely ironic, but the film (directed by Guy Green) goes all out for the woman's angle, heavily underlining the mother's agonies of indecision: Miss de Havilland, expert at the portrayal of gracious grief, is in her element. Yvette Mimieux is touching, attractive and never embarrassing as the retarded heroine; George Hamilton imitates the Italian boy with sufficient accuracy; and there is Rossano Brazzi as his father, the smug and sexy middle-aged Latin male, to show Miss de Havilland the sights of Florence with the same assurance that once melted Katharine Hepburn on her conducted tour of Venice.

Henry James saw the American experience of Europe as a combination of artistic fertilisation and moral corruption, and his view survives today at a less sophisticated stratum of society. The girls in *Three Coins in the Fountain*, the school-teacher in *Summer Madness*, looked on the trip to Europe as a passport to romance, the chance of a fling licensed by the cultural value of antiquity: to cross the Atlantic constitutes both a sexual promise and a sexual threat. In *Light in the Piazza* the promise is fulfilled, and the instinctive, brainless heroine finds a haven in a formal world where sensuality has been absorbed into a strictly codified society. In *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (Warner-Pathé) Williams is concerned, as

always, with the sexual threat—the physical grace of the young Italian gigolo, the beauty of wicked old Rome, conceal a rotten, stinking centre, corrupt and corrupting. Mrs. Stone is a puritan who has been shielded from passion by success. Her eminence on Broadway, we are given to understand, was due more to good looks than to talent; she depended on her husband more than she loved him. Widowed, forgotten, adrift in Rome, she is ripe for one of those dramatic *dégringolades* that fascinate Tennessee Williams, who delights in exposing the secret alliance between fastidious delicacy and callous brutality.

But, in the film, the *dégringolade* never takes place. Vivien Leigh is much too poised, too pretty, to suggest a lady coming to terms with the dark corners of her soul. In the sadistic scene where her hangers-on sense that she is fatally wounded and reveal their contempt for her, she remains in command of the situation; one merely feels that her guests are being pointlessly rude. And when she finally throws her door-key from the balcony to the grubby young vagrant waiting below (who turns out, on a closer look, to be Jeremy Spenser) the gesture has little significance. This is not entirely the fault of Miss Leigh; the staid and stogy direction of José Quintero is really to blame. He, and the whole film with him, get side-tracked among the pleasures of Rome—the rich restaurants, the beautiful dresses. The villainous procuress (shades of Madame Merle in *Portrait of a Lady*!) has become a figure from pantomime, crooning over her cat like a jolly witch. Lotte Lenya has great fun as the Contessa, and her performance is magnificent in its way: but it is rather short on subtlety. The best written role is that of the gigolo; this time it is Warren Beatty who has to pretend to be an Italian, and he does it very well. Williams' novel is overwritten and more than slightly absurd, but its climax leaves the reader with a feeling of deep dismay. The dismay suggested by the film version is not that of a woman who has become something she has always despised, but rather the temporary irritation of a T.W.A. tourist who has missed her plane at Ciampino.

Tender is the Night (Fox) is a disordered novel: towards the end, Dick Diver's collapse is reflected in the structure of the book itself, which seems to disintegrate in sympathy with the relationship between Dick and Nicole. It is this subjectivity, this palpable link between Fitzgerald's own experience and the story he is telling, which lifts the material from the triviality of the gossip-column glamour, glib nostalgia for the jazz age and ill-digested psychiatry, into the realm of art: the result is painful, imperfect, unforgettable. In his literate screenplay, Ivan Moffat has had to impose some sort of order on the original, and under Henry King's pedestrian direction the book's distinction has vanished—as it were, tidied away.

The flashback has been preserved (after Fitzgerald's death a new version of the book was made, which restored strict chronological sequence) but this structure is a cliché in the cinema. It is not the only cliché in the film. The psychiatric details have been simplified, the plot is followed step by ponderous step, the message of the story is spelled out for us (as the advertisements proclaim: "You can't be a doctor and a husband to the same woman"). For the first half of the film, Nicole is dependent on Dick; in the second half, this is reversed: the relationship in the book was surely more complex, more profound, than that. A great deal of time is wasted in showing the characters getting from one place to another; when they arrive at their destinations, the scenes that occur there, so shattering in the



"The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone": Lotte Lenya and (in his last screen appearance) Ernest Thesiger.

novel, go for nothing. Jason Robards Junior is shown sitting in a railway carriage on his way to and from Switzerland as often as Olivia de Havilland in *Light in the Piazza* is seen shunting between Florence and Rome. The authenticity of the backgrounds is so obtrusive that it becomes a handicap—for once, one longs for a studio backdrop. And why do fairly sophisticated film-makers (Richardson in *Sanctuary*, Kazan in *Splendour in the Grass*, King here) assume that everybody in the Twenties danced the Charleston at every social occasion? This recurring sequence has become a false and irritating cliché: it is time it was suppressed.

The casting does not help. Robards is fine as Dick when he is beginning to get a bit groggy, but he cannot convey the vitality, promise and charm of the younger man. Jennifer Jones does better as Nicole than might have been expected, but she fatally domesticates the character. Jill St. John, quite amusing as a dumb voluptuous starlet in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, gives the same performance as Rosemary, who is meant to be shy, serious and innocent: not only is she out of key with the story, but also ludicrously out of period. Only two of the actors convince: Paul Lukas as Doctor Dohmler, Grand Old Man of the Zürichsee, and Joan Fontaine as the ruthlessly rich Baby Warren—a genuine Fitzgerald conception.

FRANCIS WYNDHAM

THE LADY WITH THE LITTLE DOG

ONE FEELS AT TIMES an intellectual urge to revisit certain old friends on the bookshelf: Hans Castorp in his sick-room on top of the Magic Mountain; Rubashov, ex-Commissar in Cell 414. But a regular yearly visit to Chekhov's characters is rather more than this. One has a relationship with them; one would like to express one's sympathy, or give them a consoling word: Dr. Astrov, tipsily soliloquising about "dirt, stench and smoke everywhere" in provincial Russia; or Nina, the "Seagull" who has made her own sacrifice to discover that "what really matters is knowing how to endure things"; or the lovers of *The Lady with the Little Dog* (Contemporary), chained by their "intolerable fetters". Their story, too, takes place deep inside Chekhov territory, on that endless plain of the Great Russian Frustration where so much nobility and beauty is swallowed up by a weary incapacity for action. The forests Astrov speaks of are "literally groaning under the axe"; Uncle Vanya "might have been a Schopenhauer, a Dostoevsky"—but all that is left for him is the hope of rest when everything sadly dies away, like that distant sound "coming as if out of the sky" at the end of *The Cherry Orchard*. Our sympathy surrounds this gallery of non-heroes, who can only afford to dream about a future in which "life will become peaceful, gentle and sweet as a caress."

"How could they shake off these intolerable fetters?" This is the tormenting question that concludes the story of a bitter-sweet illicit love affair between Dmitri Gourov, an unhappily married Moscow official, and Anna Sergueievna, young wife of a staid provincial conformist. The affair, begun lightly in the bored turn-of-the-century atmosphere of a Black Sea holiday resort, becomes for both of them the love of a lifetime. But for both it comes much too late. They suffer, they allow themselves to be carried away; she travels up to Moscow for a clandestine meeting. They have the courage to look their feelings in the face, but when action is demanded they are too insecure, too afraid, and on Gourov's part too tiredly Russian, to carry it out. And although the final fade-out leaves them with no real solution (does any Chekhov story end on a full-stop?) the last paragraph of the novelette offers a rich promise: "It seemed that but a little while and the solution would be found, and there would begin a new, lovely life." Chekhov spiritualises his non-heroes; he hopes for them, for in a world of jaded artificiality they, at least, had the courage of their emotions.

As a contrast, Antonioni's anti-heroes come to mind: the lovers of *L'Avventura*, the couple in *La Notte* who try to evade the truth about themselves. Yet Chekhov (as reflected in Heifitz's faithful screen adaptation) seems in some ways to be Russia's nineteenth century Antonioni. His heroes, too, have no power of action; their frustration is played out against a background of wasted formal beauty. Inner dramas vibrate beneath a seemingly still surface, and turning points come through the realisation of feelings previously suppressed or denied. After this shock of realisation nothing really changes: we end up on the same note of bleak though in a way uplifting desolation. Though much more warm and optimistic, Chekhov, too, observes his world calmly, from a distance.



"The Lady with the Little Dog": Iya Savvina as Chekhov's Anna Sergueievna on her holiday by the Black Sea.

In *The Lady with the Little Dog*, the intensity of the lovers' feelings might seem to demand extravagant close-ups; but their inner frustration, and the impassivity of the world around them, calms it down—like Antonioni's cold, glass-screened Milan—to a withdrawn pattern of leisurely long shots.

Heifitz's adaptation, faithful yet visually creative, perfectly catches this melancholy and repression. He doesn't select elements from the story but gives a new life to the work as a whole, translating into a novelette of images what the writer so exactly recorded in words: Anna's lorgnette; the lace on her clothes; the horses sleepily plodding along the snowy avenue; Gourov's absent-minded nibbling of the melon seeds after making love; his gesture in picking up the gloves she had left behind to place them on the station gate—all these are half-sentences, references in the text. Put on the screen they re-create their own little intimate world.

In his earlier films, Heifitz also attempted to approach general truths by way of personal detail. But after partial successes (*Baltic Deputy*, 1937; *Member of the Government*, 1939), faltering experiments (*The Great Family*, 1954; *The Roumiantsev Case*, 1956), and an outright failure with modern Soviet realism (*My Dear Man*, 1958), he shows his real strength with such a "conservative" subject. Alexei Batalov, with his amiable passivity, creates a genuinely enigmatic hero, and Iya Savvina's fragile charm and voice blend the fair lady into "the shyness and awkwardness of inexperienced youth." In many places the picture is as it were liberated by the text. So Chekhov's "instruction" when Anna unexpectedly meets Gourov again at the theatre ("she got up and walked quickly to the exit . . . along the corridors, down the stairs, up the stairs, with the crowd shifting and shimmering before her eyes") becomes in Heifitz's hands a powerful bravura piece of *mise en scène*. He develops single sentences (the arrival of the steamer) into brilliant little atmospheric set-pieces, and, with the help of Moskvina's camera, brings out the full poetic power of the sea and landscapes. Only in the middle section, in Gourov's gradual awakening to the drabness of his life, which is also the least gripping part of the story, does the conception of a visual novelette somewhat misfire. Here Heifitz is forced to illustrate a psychological process through stray references, and for a while he seems to lose the unity of the picture. The painfully moving final scene, however, finds director and writer again shoulder to shoulder.

This seemingly static, perhaps even academic, picture is more than "the best Chekhov adaptation to date." It is a piece of pure *mise en scène*, and that of the best sort—the sort that works from the centre of its subject, and on that foundation constructs its visual language. Heifitz (and Chekhov) can afford to fade out at the moment when their lovers enter the bedroom—where their fashion-

able colleagues would probably *begin* the scene. He uses his close-ups when required by the hidden logic of the emotions, not by a sudden capricious mood of the lens. Yet this is a film "written with the camera." Academic or not, it is incomparably more modern than many of its highfalutin contemporaries.

ROBERT VAS

WEST SIDE STORY

THE JETS LOUNGE indolently against the netting of a grimly asphalted open space somewhere on New York's West Side, very rough, crumpled, stained and matter-of-fact; there is a real street beyond, and they look like real young toughs. After some business with a scattering of juvenile bystanders they set off walking, quite ordinarily, down a real, ordinary New York sidewalk; and then suddenly, inexplicably, first in ones and twos and then all together, they freeze into a succession of coolly classical ballet poses. This is only the first of several such jolts in *West Side Story* (United Artists), eagerly advertised as an experimental musical really shot on the streets of New York.

After this opening sequence, however, we are moved briskly back to a familiar studio world in which a rooftop surrounded by winking neon lights turns out, unsurprisingly, to be a smooth and well-tended dance floor, the "rumble" takes place on an equally well-prepared surface supposedly under a viaduct, and so on. Indeed after the first number the directors, Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, having made their gesture in favour of stark neo-realism, are content to keep mainly to comfortably muted studio realism, with occasional bouts of symbolic camerawork—the whole vast Panavision screen dimmed and fuzzed except for those portions of it occupied by the potential lovers, caught in a "Some Enchanted Evening" situation at the local hop; expressionistic effects for their "wedding" among the dummies in the dress-shop where she works.

Well, comes the immediate answer, you can't expect realism from a musical, or for that matter much consistency: it must be, by its very nature, an exotic and irrational entertainment. Precisely, but isn't this taking us right back where we started, somewhere before *Oklahoma*? And in fact it is only fitting that a cycle which began in

the cinema with one (originally) Jerome Robbins-Leonard Bernstein collaboration, *On the Town*, should look very much like ending with another. What *On the Town*, more than any other single film, brought into prominence and made into the new orthodoxy of the screen was the integrated musical, in which there would be no heavily planted cues for song, no putting-on-a-show subterfuges, but instead song, dance and dialogue all integrated into some new composite form, each serving in its own way to carry the story forward and each merging imperceptibly into the others as the story demanded. This has been accepted almost without argument as an ideal, and most musicals since *On the Town* have been weighed by this standard and found wanting.

What *West Side Story* fairly conclusively demonstrates, however, is the limitation of this technique. It works perfectly well as a way to tell a story provided there isn't much of a story to tell. Three sailors go ashore on a 24-hour pass, meet three girls, and go back to their ship the next morning: the plot could be covered quite adequately in about ten minutes, so there is plenty of room to spare. Moreover, with such a slight and light-hearted pretext, nobody is going to worry much about realism—no one will suppose that the street up which the characters sing and dance has any but the most incidental relationship to any real street in real New York (even if, just for the record, it was shot there). But with *West Side Story* we are involved in something very different: a tragic drama retelling *Romeo and Juliet* in terms of modern race-conflict, no less. And for most of the time the song-into-speech-into-dance convention just does not work as a way of telling it, or not if you are going to have any truck with realism as well.

In the theatre the work was at least consistent in its removal from reality. Whatever you do with it, a stage is a stage is a stage; the elegant theatrical backgrounds are not real tenements or anything like them, and no one in his right mind could confuse the well-drilled chorus-boys in their beautifully laundered jeans with real juvenile delinquents. Willy nilly, the medium is artificial. But in the film you have to decide whether you are going to be artificial or not. Perhaps if treated with the consistent artificiality of, say, *Occupe-toi d'Amélie* as a fully-fledged opera ballet film, *West Side Story* might work in the same way (though admittedly the mind boggles). On the other hand, if it is going to opt for realism (even muted studio realism) some clear rethinking had to be done.

Here and there a piece comes off equally well in both contexts—the battle of the idioms at the dance is a good example—but there are many others which do not work at all on film. Whatever dramatic sense, for instance, does it make to have the elaborate "Play It Cool" number immediately after the rumble, when a killing has just taken place, the hero and heroine are tucked away upstairs and the police are combing the area? What we really want here is a couple of lines of dialogue to establish what the minor characters are doing before we rush back to the inexorable working-out of the plot. Accepting the principle of putting song, dance and dialogue on an equal footing as far as carrying the story is concerned, in the film this is evidently a case of choosing the wrong means for the purpose in view. And examples could be multiplied.

But significantly, when they occur, the judgment always goes against song and dance and in favour of good plain prose. Song and dance are right for moments of lyrical expansion and relaxation, but are woefully uneconomical when it is just a question of conveying one piece of elementary information quickly. And so we are back, after all, at the cue-for-song musical. When a musical loads itself with as much plot and takes itself as seriously as *West Side Story*, it seems best to keep the music for high spots and cover the low ground as quickly as possible by other means. In fact, John Arden's remarks about one of his own plays seem sharply relevant:

I feel that many of the scenes would have been better if I had gone about it more naturalistically, and used more natural prose. I think the use of formal verse and good straightforward vernacular prose in juxtaposition is quite a good solution even in a modern play. If people are speaking formal verse with lines that rhyme the audience does not have to worry whether it sounds natural or not. They are talking poetry. It's with the half-and-half thing that one is in trouble.

It is with precisely the half-and-half thing that *West Side Story* is in trouble, since we spend half our time being forcibly worried about whether or not it looks natural, which should be sublimely beside the point. But substitute "music" for "formal verse" in Arden's



"One, Two, Three": James Cagney, his dancing secretary (Lilo Pulver) and bemused Soviet trade envoy.

comment and the answer lies ready to hand. It is only fair to add that the technical credits, as they say, are all impeccable (the sound-recording is especially intimidating) and the performances good enough within the limits laid down for them, though only Richard Beymer (surprisingly) comes up with a personality big enough to fill the big screen. But to cancel out the indecision at the film's centre, these are just not enough.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

In Brief

ONE, TWO, THREE (*United Artists*). For Billy Wilder, as for Hitchcock, thin ice exists to be walked on. The idea of making the Brandenburg Gate the focal point of a comedy, even if for political reasons the film had to be shot in Munich, and of taking a chance on what would happen in Berlin between the time *One, Two, Three* went into production and the time it was shown, would occur only to the nerveless. Unhappily, like most cynics, Wilder has acquired a certain contempt for his own public: he knows that people will laugh at the bad jokes as well as the good ones, and into a picture which generally aims at bad-taste sophistication, he's mixed gags which might be considered naive if encountered in the school magazine. Having so taken the edge off the film, he has then handled it all at breakneck speed. The jokes hurtle by, as they did in Hollywood comedies of the prodigal Forties, and the audience is doing quite well if it manages to pick up two in every three.

Wilder has set his timing by James Cagney's performance, as the Coca-Cola salesman who first tries to undo the awkward marriage of the boss's daughter to an unkempt but well-indoctrinated East German, and then to convert the boy overnight into a suitable son-in-law, titled but go-getting. Cagney has the snap and resilience of one of those rubber balls attached to a piece of elastic. Hit him at any angle and he bounces back, hectoring, domineering, finger-snapping, and as alert as a terrier. Lilo Pulver, as a secretary better equipped for dancing on tables than typing, keeps up gamely; Arlene Francis, armoured with wisecracks like the wife in any Forties comedy, is sensibly not required to try.

In fact, having chosen this combustibly contemporary subject, Wilder has reverted to the manner of twenty years ago in his treatment of it. The three Russians, bent on importing Coca-Cola and blondes, are a direct crib from *Ninotchka*, whilst Horst Buchholz, defiantly bawling his slogans while being outfitted to meet the Western world, serves as a kind of Garbo in reverse. Wilder has advanced in cynicism during the last twenty years, and *One, Two, Three* sustains no national illusions; the Russians are boorish and incompetent, the Germans pompous and subservient, the Americans boorish and gullible. A chase in a disintegrating car, a conversation with a German secretary who claims to have served in the underground—the railway, of course—during the war, and a visit to a dejected East Berlin night-club, with a conductor of impeccably intellectual appearance sadly leading his band through "Yes, We Have No Bananas", are comedy scenes exploited with masterly finesse. The level of the rest fluctuates between flat-out farce and elementary satire, mainly directed Eastwards. Coca-Colonisation gets off lightly; and one wonders, as before with films which introduce brand names so freely, just who is advertising what. Pepsi-Cola is even allowed a mention. It may be illusion, but when Arlene Francis considers the possibility of working for the rival concern, is there, in the tilt of the head and the flicker of an eye, a suggestion that Pepsi-Cola's most celebrated representative is in her mind? It wouldn't be out of place in a film which allows Cagney a threatening gesture with a grapefruit, and whose own thoughts are clearly and advantageously as much on Hollywood's fast and frivolous past as on the Berlin crisis.—PENELOPE HOUSTON

SUMMER AND SMOKE (*Paramount*). The old Spanish proverb which claims that Don Juan is haunted by a thousand ghosts can be understood in at least three different ways. It can mean that promiscuity destroys the loved one, or that promiscuity leads to self-destruction, or, worst of all, that it arouses maudlin fantasies about disintegration. This proverb sums up fancifully the various aspects

of a certain type of sexual guilt. It is a guilt which recurs obsessively in Tennessee Williams' plays, with maudlin fantasy for the most part playing the major role in the obsession.

This is certainly true of *Summer and Smoke*, a film adaptation by James Poe and Meade Roberts of one of the earlier plays, where a promising story is spoilt by a sentimental treatment and a formidable parade of symbolism. A simple, sharp case of infatuation is inflated into a grandiose allegory about the demands of the Soul and the demands of the Flesh, and of how awful the consequences will be should the twain ne'er meet. A very symbolic young lady named Miss Alma floats into love ("I'm beginning to feel like a water-lily on a Chinese lagoon") with a suety philanderer (Laurence Harvey) who has somehow managed to acquire a *magna cum laude* in medicine. The results are disastrous: for by the time Alma has buckled down to the needs of the Flesh, the doctor has come to terms both with his Soul and a pert young thing (Pamela Tiffin) who, sensibly, has never been worried by psychosomatic problems. Discovering her loss, Miss Alma—and this is where maudlin fantasy obtrudes the most—sets out on the road to prostitution. Much of this extraordinary tale, one might add, takes place beneath the statue of an angel which we are told represents Mercy.

With its Chinese lanterns, oriental gazebos, and much harped-upon doppelgangers, this charming film is ever up in the clouds. At the same time, Geraldine Page's performance, which unifies tactfully both the anguish and the dottiness of Miss Alma, does convey the down-to-earth poignancy of frustration. And with this, the fine Technicolor photography (Charles Lang, Jr.), which brings an imaginative glow to Peter Glenville's somewhat uninventive direction, and Una Merkel's zest as the understandably lunatic mother, do all serve to add up to a watchable divertissement.

ERIC RHODE

SIDNEY LUMET's translation of Arthur Miller's **A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE** (*Paramount*) achieves a disappointing combination of scrupulous respect and imaginative failure which exposes the play's flawed structure. The centre of Miller's play is the narrative of Eddie Carbone's almost incestuous love for his niece and foster-child, Catherine; his passion, which he cannot accept or recognise in himself, forces him to break family and community bonds, and



"Summer and Smoke":
Una Merkel and Geraldine Page.

finally kills him. But Miller was not only concerned with the story of a tragic obsession. Through his use of Alfieri, the lawyer who addresses his lyrical monologues to the audience, Miller attempts to investigate the immigrant-longshoreman community which Eddie is part of, the values that community demands, and the respect, the "name", it grants its members when they comply. Alfieri's monologues also touch, and attempt to develop, the conflict between what is law ("The law is only a name for what has a right to happen") and what is natural, and the resulting friction when men move from a more barbarous to a more civilised society. But Alfieri's musings jar against the rigid naturalism of the central narrative, and the play fails to cohere.

Lumet's film heightens the play's weaknesses because he binds himself so tightly to it. Miller's secondary themes, necessarily verbal in the original, are never seized upon and made visually telling; and when Lumet does add new scenes, he manages to be derivative and clumsy. His direction and Michel Kelber's camerawork make gestures towards establishing the feeling of longshoremen working, but are really concerned to make the necessary points about Eddie. Whenever the camera moves outside the claustrophobic Carbone flat (as in the automat sequence), the scene wavers into some dim half-life, only to grind to an obvious halt as another visual point is made. Eddie stares at a telephone box and the sound track's drums beat. Eddie's mouth twists as Catherine and Rodolpho dance through the automat. Throughout the film, the camera is not allowed to observe, only to register.

What Lumet registers adequately is the central narrative. Eddie's love for Catherine comes revealed through a nervous rhythm of long close-ups of Eddie and Catherine (staring at each other, lighting cigarettes, touching hands), broken by short, repetitive cuts to the face of Bea, Eddie's wife, watching and reacting. When Bea's cousins, illegal Sicilian immigrants whom Eddie has agreed to shelter, add two more sides to the triangle, the rhythm slows, the camera movement builds the drama in smooth, slowly enlarging close-ups, with slow pans and dissolves adding to the smouldering oppressiveness that Eddie will explode. Raf Vallone's Eddie has a monumental solidity, a convincing performance in depth, but his style contrasts harshly with Maureen Stapleton's shallow, superficially insecure Bea, all rolling eyes, fluttering hands, constantly breaking voice.

The inadequacies of the narrative, apart from Jean Sorel, horribly miscast as Rodolpho, are Miller's. Norman Rosten's faithful screenplay reproduces Catherine as honey-sweet idiot rather than teenager (how many meaningful women has Miller created?), forces Bea to alternate between deeply sensitive and incredibly stupid utterances, forces Rodolpho somehow to suggest effeminacy, glamour, foolishness and nobility. But Rosten's screenplay also makes loose words out of Miller's themes. Had Rosten and Lumet been imaginative enough to extend the play into the docks and neighbourhood, and visually create the place that Eddie works and the place he lives in with some sense of what they both felt like, what values they demand, *A View from the Bridge* would have been more than another filmed play with an internationally hybrid cast.

NORM FRUCHTER

ONLY TWO CAN PLAY (*British Lion*) uneasily stretches its theme—adultery—between a serious and a comic treatment. On the one hand, there are the scenes at home: that of a professionally frustrated, socially under-privileged librarian, John Lewis, obliged to live in furnished digs oppressively close to his fellow men, a home further cramped by the insistent presence of his children. The three-dimensional reality of these scenes is made all the more convincing, even occasionally pathetic, by the delicately controlled performance of Virginia Maskell as his wife; and here, at times, the comedy has the rough texture of real life and the dialogue (Bryan Forbes) the bite of a man seeking relief from his own despair.

Once outside the home, however, Sidney Gilliat's film descends to the disheartening cliché of British-American sexual comedy, an essentially emasculated comedy of titillation, depending for its effect upon the conditioned reflex in all of us with which we respond to a blue joke. The laughter, more often than not, is tinged with embarrassment; and here the quite real provocativeness of, say, the bathroom scene is turned to farce in the nick of time by a quick change

to the slapstick comedy of undressing or—as later in the film—of bringing under control the multifarious gadgets of Mrs. Gruffyd-Williams' car. And, of course, the adultery is never allowed to take place. The situation is certainly real enough for any adult audience; but the film spares us the burden of an adult response and releases us with what is supposed to be the feeling of no-harm-done: it was all just good clean fun. By the end, we feel cheated. In the "happy" final sequence, for instance, who is looking after the children? The question has no answer in the film because, by that time, it has become irrelevant. The domestic problems implicitly posed in the opening sequences have not really been answered or even explored: the whole situation has just been played with.

The film's essential failure, then, is the result of this split intention, a split which can be localised in Peter Sellers' protectively deadpan performance as John Lewis. With his wife, he attempts to create for us a suitably three-dimensional character; with Mrs. Gruffyd-Williams (rather crudely played by Mai Zetterling), he is merely a figure of farce. Insufficiently stylised to be successful as artificial comedy, the film confuses us by its occasional claims to a fully adult level of response—claims which are resented because they have to be ignored.—PETER HARCOURT

THE SNOBS (*Sebricon*). After the recent *Lady Chatterley* trial, it was suggested that some of the witnesses for the defence were less than honest in their pleas that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was an extremely moral book. And critics often do find themselves endowing works with moral or artistic values they do not possess in an attempt to prove to their (presumably) more Puritan readers that the work in question is really respectable. While this is often expedient, it is undeniably hypocritical, and tends to propagate the belief that smut is admissible only if it is (a) really moral underneath, (b) "beautifully done", or (c) 400 years old (Rabelais).

Slightly cut in France, *The Snobs* may be further censored here, but I still bet that it will be the most outrageous film anyone in London has seen. It is no more sincerely reforming in spirit than much of Swift; though extremely well made it is not "great film art"; and it is not 400 years old. It is, however, excruciatingly funny. Swift declared that he wanted to vex the world rather than divert it: Jean-Pierre Mocky does both.

The film begins with a bang and a gurgle: the president of a milk co-operative in a provincial town disappears into a vat of double cream, thus provoking spasms of giggling from his assistants and his widow. The plot concerns the attempts of the four directors to get the suddenly vacated job, but this is only the pretext for a catalogue of frailty, corruption and folly. "Ambition often puts men upon doing the meanest office; so climbing is performed in the same posture with creeping"—Swift again, and like much of Swift, *The Snobs* is not so much satire as a wholesale denunciation of mankind. Through the film passes a rogues' gallery of provincial types: the local undertaker whose passion for sucking raw eggs takes on a more sinister note when we observe him surreptitiously gathering a drop of blood spilled during a boxing match and voluptuously licking it off his finger (this was cut in France); the pure-minded eunuch who spends his spare time training young virgins in ballet dancing; the one-eyed, pig-like Youth Club leader whose strange healing powers lead him into the most equivocal of situations in a lighthouse; the retired general who leads a troop of naked cadets in a series of insane manoeuvres; the man of action under-endowed by nature who seeks refuge from tale-telling females at the North Pole; not forgetting the peculiarly secular bishop who is a key figure in the intrigue.

For all its loathing, *The Snobs* doesn't leave one with a desire to get a job at an H-bomb factory, but rather, just as some unbearably healthy and wholesome American films turn one's mind to perpetrating nameless outrages on helpless deaf-mutes, so *The Snobs* sends one out of the cinema feeling rather set up. One admires Mocky's courage in making such a film at a time when much of French intellectual life is unhealthily conformist. If *The Snobs* be smut—then he has made the most of it. Jean-Pierre Mocky (who both directed the film and wrote the script) doesn't waste much time on innuendo: the dirty jokes are spelled out. So one doesn't snigger, one roars.—RICHARD ROUD

KENJI MIZOGUCHI IS GENERALLY recognised as one of the masters of the cinema. In France he is a prize pet in the *Cahiers* menagerie. Over here his *Ugetsu Monogatari* took fourth place (with *Greed*) in the SIGHT AND SOUND critics' poll. At the same time only one of Mizoguchi's films has been distributed commercially in this country: *Street of Shame*. Not unpredictably, this sensitive study of geisha life was billed as a second feature to a nudist travelogue and played for a roaring six months. Now, six years after Mizoguchi's death, we may be allowed a more serious opportunity to appraise his talent since *Ugetsu*, one of the last and possibly the greatest of his eighty-eight films, is finally being shown commercially in London.

This *Ugetsu* is an essay in the uncanny: an unearthly fable, uncanny because it revives in us those childhood fears aroused by a wind whistling in the chimney-piece or doors creaking in the night. Throughout it, as in a dream, we find ourselves in a mysterious, fabulous country of rivers wreathed in mists, drab dry villages, parched plains, and ghost-haunted castles. Nothing is what it seems. The geography of this country is of no map; it shifts and changes as do the ghosts in the castle. And there is no peace. A terrible unease possesses the land. Muffled gunfire troubles the air. At any moment we might expect the ground to open beneath our feet and the mountains to spout fire. Such daimios as the Lords Shibata and Nobunaga—"that hideous beast"—are unknown powers, seldom seen but always about us in the presence of their myrmidons—those spitting samurai, brigands and pirates, who pillage land and sea, rape women and sack villages.

At the centre (or is it the periphery?) of this nightmarish world rides a sanctuary of apparent calm. In one of a cluster of hovels live two potters, Genjuro and Tobei. Though their existence is hard and poverty-stricken, they are not without the comforts of family life. Genjuro adores his perfect wife Miyagi and his child; Tobei has arrived at a working relationship with his less perfect Ohama. This stability is reassured by their few possessions, the rice and flour which sustain them and the wheel and clay which provide them with a pittance of gold. Yet this stability, as we soon realise, is illusory, for the natural order on which it is based has been disturbed. Miyagi, the perfect wife, sees clearly how war has changed the spirit of man by arousing in him a desire for a different life; and she pleads with her husband to accept his lot and try to find happiness through his work. In effect, Miyagi here states the theme of the film: that human wishes are illusory and inevitably lead to disaster. As the story demonstrates, all the characters save for her yearn for what they naturally should not have, and all of them achieve their ambitions at far too heavy a cost.

Marauders descend upon the hovels and with relish begin to sack them. And so the potters and their families take flight, leaving behind of necessity a kiln of baking pots. Nothing is certain: the possessions which gave them confidence are as insecure as the spirit of man, and as easily broken. In a sequence of great beauty, Mizoguchi shows us the flight of the refugees from the ruined village. As always, his effects are simple and original: a static long shot of villagers streaming from right to left through high reeds gives way to a diagonal tracking shot of their squatting in a declivity—a transition which may sound obvious, but which only a master director could bring off as breathtakingly as it is done here. The satisfied marauders leave the village, and the potters creep back: to their delight, they find their kiln undamaged.

This episode is best described as an exposition; for by establishing the general insecurity, the disorder of nature within and without the soul, it does no more than foreshadow the plot, which now begins. The potters, frightened by the thought that the kiln might all too easily have been destroyed,

UGETSU MONOGATARI

ERIC RHODE



"The best of silks, of choicest hue . . ."
Masayuki Mori and Machiko Kyo

determine to market their wares as soon as possible. And yet, with barbarians lurking behind every bush and tree, how are they to make their way to the city? Discovering a small pirogue, they decide to travel by water, and so push out into the lake. The journey is eerie; the lake is so dark, misty and forbidding that the traveller might take it for Lethe, the river of death. Not unexpectedly, when a prow glides up through the mist, the potters assume it to be a phantom ship and its sole slumped passenger to be a ghost. This irony is a typical misunderstanding in a film where nothing is what it seems. For the passenger in fact is all too human and has been mortally wounded by pirates; and, before their boats swing apart, he woefully warns the potters of the dangers of the lake. Genjuro rightly sees this omen as evil. He lands his wife and child on the bank and then proceeds with Tobei and Ohama to the market. What he does not realise is that the omen is a warning against the separation of families and not against the threat of pirates.

As in a Jacobean play, the action now splits into plot and



"A sanctuary of apparent calm": the potters' wives at work.

subplot, in each of which the two potters take separate parts as protagonists. Both plots are variations on the main theme and parallel each other in numerous ways. Broadly speaking, they both describe how a man may be seduced by an ideal of perfection, how he cheats to realise it, and how, as he discovers the falsity of the ideal, he must pay a heavy price for having been both ambitious and dishonest. In the subplot, for instance, war has aroused in Tobei an obsessive desire to become a samurai, to follow the formal life of a warrior. In the city he is able to achieve this, for by the sale of pots he makes sufficient gold to buy himself a suit of samurai armour. Luck is with him: by chance he is the only witness to the decapitation of a war-lord. Stealing the dead man's head, and somewhat pusillanimously stabbing the executioner in the back, Tobei then trots off to a rival war-lord and offers him the severed head. This is a witty move. Tobei is at once proclaimed a hero and appointed captain to a troop. Thus, a trifle shabbily perhaps, his ambition is realised. The price he has to pay for this is that his deserted wife is left a prey to other samurai. Staggering across a plain she is accosted by

four oafs who drag her into a conveniently empty palace and rape her.

Mizoguchi shows here by a visual parallel—the scene in which gold is scattered over the raped Ohama mimes the scene in which Tobei is paid for his service—how both husband and wife have been degraded by the husband's ambition. And there are other, more abstract parallels. Throughout *Ugetsu* the effects of war and money are shown as similar and disastrous, though Mizoguchi never explains in what way this is so. Later, in a moment of great anguish, Ohama, who has become a prostitute, meets Tobei accidentally in a geisha house and asks him to buy her service. By the prows of two beached pirogues they act out a reconciliation: Tobei admits, a trifle implausibly I think, his folly and the two of them return to their hovel, hoping as Ohama says that "our sufferings were not in vain."

This robust subplot is woven into the more delicate texture of the main plot, which, superficially, has quite a different story. While selling his wares in the market-place, Genjuro is approached by two women. One is a beauty, the crane-like Lady Wakasa, the other a senile nurse-attendant, who asks Genjuro to deliver a large number of his goods to the Wakasa residence. Genjuro, attracted by the Lady, willingly agrees. At her magnificent castle, the hopelessness of their desires becomes plain: as much as he wishes to possess the perfection of the Lady, she wishes to learn the secrets of his art. Both these desires are impossible and are, in a sense, intimations of danger. Yet Genjuro is so enchanted by the world he has entered that he does not realise how sinister it is. This atmosphere of doom is skilfully built up by Mizoguchi as the Lady Wakasa sings to the potter:

*The best of silks, of choicest hue
May change and fade away,
As would my life, Beloved One,
If thou shouldst prove untrue . . .*

As she sings the camera pans rapidly around the room, and from a dark samurai mask comes a low coarse laugh. The nurse hastily explains away this strange noise by telling Genjuro that it is made by the Lady's dead father, who is showing, in a fashion, his approval of her lover. Whereupon the Lady asks Genjuro to marry her; and he, without admitting that he is married already, happily concurs.

The love scenes that follow are as stylised as a Hokusai print. First: a rock-pool and the lovers slide towards each other through curlicues of steam. Then: a lawn, and far away from us on a white silk carpet the lovers chase each other, their stiff robes twirling about them. A close-up of their restless faces against the sky is followed by another long shot of the lawn and the lovers embracing. Yet, while this frolic is going on, Genjuro is still paying for his idyll. His wife, returning home from the lake, is laid upon by brigands and murdered for the sake of a few crusts of bread. And disillusionment is at hand: a priest tells him that since Lady Wakasa is a ghost, he will be dragged through the gates of the dead if he does not give her up. A confrontation takes place. The nurse-attendant admits that the Lady is not real, as none of them are. She is the ghost of a girl who died young and who has returned to the world to find the love she was denied. Genjuro, having suppressed a pang of pity, takes up a sword and in a strange and almost balletic sequence drives the ghosts out of the castle. In doing this, he accidentally falls and knocks himself out. On returning to consciousness, he finds the castle has become a charred ruin, and has been so for years. Apparently he has already entered the world of the dead. "The best of silks fade away," sings a remembered voice. Perfection is unattainable and all is a dream.

So Genjuro returns at dusk to his family and asks for a forgiveness which is freely given. Yet he still lives in illusion. The next morning he is told by neighbours that his wife is dead and that it must have been a ghost who welcomed him back. The two plots now unite again, as Genjuro and Tobei return

sadly to work. All is not lost, however, for one of the main points of the film is that man must learn how illusion is a part of reality. As he works at his pots, Genjuro hears the voice of his dead wife, telling him that she will always be with him, that her memory will be his inspiration. And so, with these words, piety has been restored and the theme has fulfilled itself. As Genjuro's child lays flowers on its mother's grave, Mizoguchi cranes up his camera so that we see, in a distant field, two men tilling the soil. With this, as it were, inverted cadence, the master brings his film to a close.

* * *

In the West we are inclined to be defensive about the supernatural. Although from the spate of films dealing with vampires and outer space it is clear that we have an appetite for it, no one finds this appetite reputable. Our characteristic response to works of this kind is ambivalent: as much as we may enjoy them and call ourselves addicts, we still have feelings of mild guilt and speak about them as if we were victims of some fashionable vice. For the same reason, the intention of the people who make these films is as ambivalent as our response; their treatment of the supernatural tends to be both spoofing and ponderous. The genre, in fact, is the most difficult in the business, and it is hard to think of any top-line director in the West (Franju perhaps excepted) who would think of risking his reputation by trying to work within it. If by chance one of them were tempted to do so, I very much doubt whether he would treat his subject with anything like Mizoguchi's seriousness.

Why is this? It is not as though we were short of material. In English literature alone, the legends of Malory, or *The Lord of the Rings*, or *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, to give a few examples, all have latent cinematic ideas. Why are producers inhibited in taking them up as projects? The reason, I think—and this is why they are so awkward in their handling of the genre—has to do with the way they view reality. "Reality, as conceived of by us, is whatever is external and hard, gross, unpleasant," wrote Lionel Trilling regretfully in *The Liberal Imagination*. Though this censure may no longer be true of the best novels being written now, this limited conception of reality still seems omnipresent in the cinema and conditions the structure of most films. Consider, for instance, the techniques employed to create character. For the most part, such techniques are simple, schematic, and in no way take into account the inner world of the individual. And yet, until we understand this inner world, the actions of human beings are barely comprehensible. For the phantasies, of which this inner world consists, are the primary content of unconscious mental processes and condition the behaviour of even the most "normal" person.

This is probably what Ibsen meant when he wrote: "Life is a contest between the phantoms of the mind"—a remark which, I think, goes a long way towards explaining why Ibsen's realism has so much substance, and why the tensions between his characters have such depth. Against this richness, the realism of many so-called realistic films appears thin, for the very reason that these films do not take seriously enough into account the phantoms of the mind. Since phantasy is an essential part of the total world, we crave, however vicariously, to make up for its loss. And so, if we cannot have a full-blooded realism, we can at least supplement our normal fare with a relish of vampires and flying saucers. Mizoguchi, however, does not appear to be inhibited by such an impoverished realism. The conventions he uses—of the fable—allow him to create both a world of actuality, in which such urgent problems as the fear of war and the lack of money are made vivid and true, and a world in which the phantoms of the mind are given full play. In doing so, he reminds us indeed that these two worlds are interdependent.

Ugetsu, as I have said, is an essay in the uncanny: that is, it preserves a surface of ordinary everyday happenings whilst at the same time creating a childhood world of animistic fears,

so that the predicaments of the characters are plausible both in naturalistic terms and in terms of the rich, more obscure movements of the mind. This dualism is both established and sustained by the conservatism of Miyagi. For when she asks her husband to accept his lot and to disregard the itch of ambition, she does in effect voice the theme on which the conventions of the film are based. Life is for her, as for Edmund Burke, a covenant between the dead, the living and the unborn; our duty therefore is not to rebel against the parental images, but to accept tradition and honour the dead.

Within the context of this theme the convention of the ghosts becomes plausible, for they represent the manner in which the past, with all its phantom memories, desires and histories, plays a vital part in the present and gives it meaning. Whether or not we find this conservatism repugnant, we must admit that it allows Mizoguchi the chance to realise vividly a number of humanist truths about the nature of inspiration, the interplay of motive and ideal, and the importance of piety ("a



Tobei achieves his ambition: the severed head is offered to the war-lord.

reverence for life"). Significantly, one of the finest of humanist films, Ichikawa's *The Burmese Harp*, is a fable with a theme identical to this. The paradox may well be that liberal humanism can only work under these conservative conditions.

Not surprisingly, the realism of *Ugetsu* is close to the realism of Greek drama. And this is not fortuitous. In his film Mizoguchi depends on the Noh theatre, both for his type of plot and for the style in which he composes his images. And the Noh theatre, as Ezra Pound pointed out, has similarities with both the Greek and the Shakespearean drama; for all of them are developments of the miracle play. *Ugetsu* is Shakespearean in the function of its images (Mizoguchi uses the symbol of war in much the same way as Shakespeare uses the symbol of storm), and in its double plot; and Grecian in that its ghosts play the same part as do the gods in Greek mythology, and that its unity is built up around a single moral conviction. Moreover, I believe that Mizoguchi would have agreed with Aristotle that a work of art should imitate the movements of the mind and not an ordering of facts; for it is in this sense, above all, that his realism is classical.

BOOK REVIEWS

GEORGES MELIES, MAGE, by Maurice Bessy and Lo Duca. Illustrated. (Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Paris.)

GEORGES MELIES, by Georges Sadoul. Illustrated. (Editions Seghers, Paris. 6 NF.)

CATALOGUE DE L'EXPOSITION COMMEMORATIVE DU CENTENAIRE DE GEORGE MELIES, edited by Henri Langlois. Illustrated. (Cinémathèque Française.)

MELIES' CENTENARY—SUITABLY celebrated by a sumptuous Exposition in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs of the Louvre and by a commemorative French postage stamp—coincides with a significant shift in appreciation. When the magician of Montreuil was first rediscovered in 1928, forgotten and broke, selling toys in his wife's kiosk on the Gare Montparnasse, it was his contribution to film techniques that seemed so astounding. He was dubbed "Créateur du Spectacle Cinématographique"; for it was he who first conceived the idea (no more obvious in 1896 than was the wheel before its invention) that the cinema could be used for *mise-en-scène* and for drama. His technical innovations were numberless. He built the first studio, was first to use artificial light for film-making, produced the first commercials, and devised practically the entire repertoire of cinematic trickery—a whole range of superimpositions, double and multiple exposures, stop actions and so on, some of which still baffle film technicians.

Only now, almost half a century after Méliès made his last film, can we begin to see clearly how much more there was than sheer technique. Indeed, more and more as his career went on, his techniques lagged far behind the general stream. He never used montage or close-ups, or moving cameras, except for trick effects. His methods became more idiosyncratic. From an innovator he came to be regarded as a reactionary. As an artist, however, Méliès is compared by M. Sadoul with Paolo Uccello, and by M. Langlois with Douanier Rousseau. Neither seems quite an accurate comparison: he had a more sophisticated detachment from his techniques than the one; from his themes than the other. His gift was the certainty with which he manipulated elements that were entirely contemporary and banal to make his own kind of visual poetry. He made something new and durable out of the theatrical ephemera of the *belle époque*—the ballets of the Alhambra, the Empire and the Châtelet; the magic shows of Maskelyne in London and his own Théâtre Robert-Houdin in Paris; the costumes, the décors, the fashions and the preoccupations of the time.

Méliès metamorphosed them into his own unique *genre*—those short films which evoke a little world that never existed before or since but which still lives vividly, enchantingly, on the screen. He could do so because he had enormous skill as a man of the theatre—M. Sadoul compares him to the designer-machinists of the Renaissance stage. The calculated rhythm of even his most primitive work is due to his experience as a performer. His skill and individuality as a draughtsman imposed on all his films the incomparable style he kept intact from the last days of the century almost up to the First World War.

Though his style was consistent, the variety of his activity remains astounding. He was rather piqued at the Grand Gala Méliès, in December 1929, because they showed there only his *féeries* and science-fiction fantasies. He would have liked to be remembered for his topical, political and social subjects as well; and he would be delighted that M. Sadoul embraces him as a fellow radical. The old anti-Boulangiste who contributed "Geo. Smile's" sharp political caricatures to *La Griffe* maintained his liberal and humane attitudes when he came to be a film-maker. The unequivocal *parti pris* of *L'Affaire Dreyfus* (1899), the social indignation of *L'Ange de Noël* (1905), the ironic asides about capital punishment in *Les Incendiaires*

(1906) and the pacifist sentiments of *La Civilisation à travers les Ages* (1906) speak of a man, not just a film-maker, several steps ahead of his own time.

The three books under review reflect stages in this changing appreciation of Méliès. *Georges Méliès, Mage* is a centenary reissue of a book first published in 1944, when Messieurs Bessy and Lo Duca were still most overwhelmed by wonderment at Méliès' technical achievements. Since the book first appeared, new research has out-paced its information and spoilt one or two of the best legends; but it remains an enchanting account of an enchanting artist. The new edition is very handsome; the illustrations—several in colour—are better reproduced than in the original edition and still provide the best pictorial record.

Monsieur Sadoul's monograph (the first in a series on "Cinéma d'Aujourd'hui") cannot compare in presentation, though the documentation is altogether more thorough and provides all the materials for revaluation. In particular M. Sadoul has the advantage of writing after the death of Charles Pathé, when a little more of the truth about the first titans of the cinema industry can out. The Machiavellism of film magnates of 1909 makes subsequent industry politics appear mildly genteel.

Monsieur Langlois's catalogue of the centenary exhibition organised by the Cinémathèque Française and L'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, a work of idolatry, is committed to Méliès as a creator rather than inventor. The rich illustrations include a striking photograph of Méliès in old age, which looks like a portrait by Mrs. Cameron, and four fine colour reproductions of his own *maquettes*. In particular a vivid cantaloup-coloured design for *Le Génie du Feu* captures the extraordinary surrealistic quality Méliès occasionally achieved in films and drawings alike, and which you find again in the Daliesque décor for *Au Pays des Jouets*, reproduced in *Georges Méliès, Mage*.

All the books succeed—perhaps they could not fail—in evoking the irresistible personality of Méliès himself. Elusive behind the legend and the films, yet pervading. A man, it seems, as pure in spirit as in his work, who combined in a strange way a perfectly childlike quality with the wit and sophistication of an old *boulevardier*—and something diabolic as well.

DAVID ROBINSON

THE DECLINE OF THE CINEMA: An Economist's Report, by John Spraos. (Allen and Unwin, 25s.)

I CAN WELL IMAGINE what my producer friends would have said ten years ago if it had been suggested to them that the time would come when someone would write a book making a strong case for subsidised exhibition. In those days I was trying to demonstrate in the PEP Report on *The British Film Industry* that if British film production were to continue the public "must be prepared for the Government not only to protect the industry indefinitely, but also to aid it financially for as far ahead as can be seen." Judging by the existence of the Film Fund Agency that demonstration succeeded in its object. And now the Alice-in-Wonderland moment has arrived. John Spraos's book advocates a policy of restraining cinema closures by a subsidised circuit and local authority assistance. The umbrella of protection which first opened over the audience, then covered the producer, must now be spread over certain categories of exhibitor.

That the spread of television has been the primary factor in the decline of the cinema is "true but trite." But "film-going depends substantially on the availability of cinemas. The more cinemas there are, the wider the choice of films and the greater their accessibility in each locality. When, therefore, the number of cinemas is reduced the volume of cinema-going goes down. And, in this instance, it goes down not because of some independent shift in tastes towards alternative entertainment but because of the curtailment of available facilities for cinema-going. This is a 'forced' abstention from the cinema and constitutes a clear social loss, a loss all the heavier for falling mostly on the lower income groups which in the nature of things do not have a wide choice of alternative entertainments."

The spirit which underlies Mr. Spraos's approach is that it would be well worth paying the price that is necessary to "preserve a large number of cinemas that would otherwise disappear."

For those who don't go around with statistics perpetually gnawing at their minds, it may be useful briefly to rehearse the extent of the cinema's decline in Britain. In 1950—the first year for which official statistics are available—there was an average weekly admission rate of nearly 27 million to the 4,600 cinemas in commercial operation.

(Incidentally if Mr. Spraos comes to a second edition he wants to check some of his figures.) In 1961 the average weekly admission rate had fallen to 9 million, and by the end of the year the number of cinemas in operation was under 2,800.

In the first part of his book Mr. Spraos examines the factors which are responsible for the decline in admissions. In the course of his analysis he destroys a hypothesis I put forward four years ago that the advent of independent television had greatly accelerated the decline in cinema admissions. I am prepared to watch this destruction without dismay—with the full statistician's tool-kit brought out to effect it I can hardly do otherwise. I am equally prepared to acknowledge that "the changed class distribution of people becoming owners of a TV set for the first time is probably the most important of a number of plausible reasons." The substantial change in the class distribution of new TV sets that took place in late 1954 is, as Mr. Spraos says, some evidence for this. But I would like to know: why did working-class homes start getting TV sets on a big scale at the end of 1954? Did the fact that ITV was already in statutory being, although not on the air, have anything to do with it? Or was it because the current of emulating the Joneses had spread that far? In answering this question (as the examiners say) bear in mind the possible consequences of set-manufacturers' advertising campaigns.

At the end of the first part of his book Mr. Spraos considers the future of cinemagoing. Sensibly he takes 1970 as a time horizon, and, in broad terms, calculates that by then admissions will have fallen to a weekly average of between five and six millions. Because he does not feel that it can have a material effect within his time horizon, he excludes pay-TV from his reckoning. Here I think he is wrong. Advances happen so much faster than the professional crystal-gazer dare predict. Space flight is one example. And so it will be, I believe, with pay-TV. Given that the installation is permitted by the Government, I would see it making a significant contribution to film receipts by 1970.

The future pattern of exhibition could well be: pay-TV, a few hundred large cinemas and, for the rest, not cinemas all over the place—their individual size quite unrelated to present-day requirements—but film projection facilities and seating space in buildings primarily used for other purposes. A small cinema in the basement is already becoming a familiar part of modern buildings.

Those taking up this book should note carefully the sub-title. Mr. Spraos, who is a Lecturer in Political Economy at University College, London, has applied the techniques of economics to the cinema in much greater detail than they have been applied before. The result is a somewhat ascetic exercise—though none the less interesting for that. Even so, if Mr. Spraos is going to continue in this field, as I hope he will, he must learn to temper his professional ritual with the gestures and utterances of the bazaar. With all deference to their abilities, a number of my friends in the industry must have had a hard time between the covers of this book.

DUNCAN CROW

INGMAR BERGMAN, by Peter Cowie. Illustrated. (A Motion Monograph. 2s. 6d.)

BERGMAN IS A FILM DIRECTOR about whom much has been written yet little of use has been said. In the numerous articles that have been scattered before the English-speaking public, there has been no responsible attempt to relate his films to the cultural background from which they have grown, to the geographical isolation of his country, or to the allegorical traditions that—from the Icelandic sagas through the novels of Selma Lagerlöf, the plays of Strindberg, and the early films of Stiller and Sjöström—for better or worse, have assisted Bergman in discovering his individual cinematic language and have helped to determine his peculiarly metaphysical cast of mind. In Bergman's work, as in so much Scandinavian art, there are certain pervasive images that often acquire symbolic force; and if we are to see them as more than eccentrically personal "rhetorical ornament" it is useful to have some information about the culture from which they have sprung.

In Mr. Cowie's study there is none of this; in fact, no information at all. Instead, he offers a series of analyses, leading us by the hand through most of Bergman's films; yet even here, regrettably, his treatment seems inadequate. Not only does he fail to appreciate the emotive force of the symbols at the very core of Bergman's work—symbols of the quest and of the cycle of the seasons—but again and again his vocabulary is too clumsy to do justice to the delicacy of implication of many of the scenes he is trying to describe. And then,

there is the old problem: Mr. Cowie seems less to have *seen* the films than to have *read* them: and so of *The Seventh Seal* he claims that "the importance of the film rests in its script," an assertion demonstrably false. For an understanding of this film *must* involve a recognition of the tension established between the Knight's pretentious intellectual demands, his desire for 'knowledge', and the visual, non-verbal elements in the film, especially the silent contentment of the travelling minstrels and the delight they take in their shared love and young child. Yet, as in Mr. Cowie's study there is no such recognition, there can be no really helpful analysis.

Finally, in his concern to point out the many similarities in a number of Bergman's films, Mr. Cowie ends by blurring the distinctions between them and by destroying our sense of the rare excellence of the very few—*Summer Interlude*, *Sawdust and Tinsel* and *Wild Strawberries*. Obviously a work of devotion by a dedicated Bergman admirer, this monograph, then, is doubly a disappointment. Such a study as it was intended to be is indeed very much needed, and yet, it seems, still remains to be done.

PETER HARCOURT

The Anglo-American Literary Quarterly

Transatlantic Review

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BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SUMMER FILM SCHOOL. ST. ANDREWS, SCOTLAND. 4TH - 18TH AUGUST. To be held at St. Andrews University, this will be a two-week residential course offering a general introduction to the art and history of film and study of the cinema as an industry and popular entertainment. Morning sessions by British Film Institute staff and professional film-makers, afternoons for film-making or recreation and evening film programmes. Single study bedrooms with wash basins. Fee, inclusive of tuition, accommodation and gratuities, 22 guineas.

The School is organised jointly with the Scottish Film Council.

Enrolment form from Summer School Secretary, British Film Institute, 81, Dean Street, W.1. REG. 0061.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Common Market

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Technicians and others earning their living in the film industry should welcome the article on the Common Market in your last issue. The facts there might help allay the near panic shown by some at the prospect of competitive film-making in a wholly free enterprise system.

British feature film production is, of course, one of our bathchair industries. This sick business has had to be kept going for so long by artificial aids that it no longer believes it can exist without them. As in the case of certain types of neurotic, the shock of removing the bathchair could be the cure (anyway, that's how the movies tell it). Abolition of subsidies under the Rome Treaty would be such shock treatment.

Hollywood has always managed to make films without State aid. How is this possible? Simply because access to tens of thousands of cinemas in the United States, and Europe, makes theirs a viable economy. Now we come to the greatest single reason (apart from all ideology) why British film-makers should support our entry to the Common Market. The 'Six' alone provides our producers with another 26,000 cinemas. Added to our own 2,900 this makes for a European market bigger even than that of the United States (total number of cinemas in U.S. on 26th December, 1961 was 16,991, including 'drive-ins'). Here, at last, is a chance to make British feature film production a viable proposition.

We all know that our cinema today is in a profound historical crisis. Two thirds of the audience has gone; one third of the cinemas closed; all since 1950. The cinema of the masses crumbles under the hammer blows of TV quiz games, *Coronation Street* and *Sunday Night at the Palladium*.

Should 'pay-as-you-view' television come, there will be 100 or 200 cinemas left open by 1970. This is the sober estimate given by Mr. John Spraos, the economist, in his hair-raising analysis, *The Decline of the Cinema*. "The additional wholesale closure of cinemas that would accompany the creeping progress of pay-as-you-view," states a recent CEA pamphlet, "could bring about the complete collapse of the British cinema film production industry . . ." But even if there is no Toll TV, Mr. Spraos demonstrates that the present number of cinemas will be more than halved to 1,400 if the drift is not checked.

How then can we survive? In my opinion, only by a radical re-orientation of effort now. The Common Market presents almost a last chance of checking the numerical decline in cinemas, thus lessening the danger to production. It is therefore a question of simple bread-and-butter politics that British film-makers should support this country's entering EEC.

Some object that because film is also an art we British might somehow be mongrelised by association with a Common Market Films Policy. Such a risk is pure fantasy. We all go to the local supermarket for Camembert, but does Double Gloucester taste less British for being sold in the same shop? Likewise does anyone believe that contact with, say, the *nouvelle vague* could seriously harm our bathchair invalid?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HAGGARTY

17, Ullswater Road,
London, S.W.13.

A Taste of Honey

SIR,—It is an excellent thing for the British cinema that *A Taste of Honey* should have been so well received both by critics and box-office. None the less I should expect a magazine like yours to be less indiscriminate in its appraisal. The film does have glaring faults, and it is not ultimately going to help the present movement towards realism in British films to overlook these faults. Rather we must learn from them and build on our modest (from an international standpoint) successes.

The film depends on superb casting and acting, as well as being based on an excellent play. Enjoyable as it is, the success is a predictable one; this breakthrough in our films is taking over

reflected glory from a renaissance in theatre and novel, rather than extending the Free Cinema spirit. *A Taste of Honey*, contrary to what your review says, fails in the way it is transferred to the screen—it is not cinematic. The conception is incoherent and gimmicky, and this is due principally to the visual treatment.

The use of photography on location, in itself an admirable idea, is self-conscious. By this I mean that the background is often so prominent that it competes with the development of the story (the frequent use of children is a case in point); at other times the backgrounds are too picturesque for the mood of the story, or settings such as fairgrounds, processions, dance-halls are becoming too obvious (they are becoming Free Cinema clichés); finally there are too many locations—any scene in a new location requires an effort of adjustment; and if this is needed too often the viewer is distracted and exhausted.

By contrast *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and even more so *Last Day of Summer*, give a great feeling of place, but this is managed unobtrusively. The settings serve their purpose, no more. We aren't constantly reminded that here is a film shot on location—what a progressive thing to do, how clever.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER MAYNE

7a Addison Avenue,
London, W.11.

Graphic Design

SIR,—I would like to touch on several points in the article "Fantasies of the Art-House Audience" by Pauline Kael, in the Winter issue of SIGHT AND SOUND. They are her description of contemporary design in the American film's titling and advertising. As a free-lance graphic designer working on several film assignments, I find her views on graphics quite out of focus.

Pauline Kael writes that "... the Swiss-graphics look provided by Saul Bass and other designers has virtually nothing to do with the style or mood of the picture, but it makes the movie look more modern."

In my opinion, nothing could be farther from the truth.

(1) None of Mr. Bass's work has anything of the "Swiss-graphics" look. Swiss designers are well known for their brilliant but rather "cold" typography. Mr. Bass's graphics are anything but "cold". His typography is lively, and most of his symbols are very human.

(2) I would like the author to cite any example of Mr. Bass's titling that had "virtually nothing to do with the style or mood of the picture." I think she will be hard pressed to find that example.

A perfect case for Bass's titling is *Psycho*. His titling interpreted both the mood and the action of the film beautifully.

In short, Pauline Kael's forte does not rest in the criticism of graphic design.

Yours faithfully,
EVERETT S. AISON

330 East 19 Street,
New York City, 3.
U.S.A.

Kleinian Concepts

SIR,—A qualification should be made to Pearson and Rhode's very interesting analysis of the New Wave in Kleinian terms. One can probably take Segal's *A Psycho-Analytic Approach to Aesthetics* as representatively Kleinian. Segal makes it clear that for her the *successful* work of art *successfully* copes with the depressive position. Even in comedy "the manic defence is never complete; the original depression is still expressed, and it must therefore have been to a large extent acknowledged and relived by the author."

It follows that Pearson and Rhode are applying Kleinian concepts in a slightly unorthodox manner. They maintain both that "our intensity of response confirms these films as works of art" and that the existentialist outlook, which the films express, is psychotic. According to Segal the artist, however neurotic, is distinguished by "an extremely high reality sense . . . in relation to his own internal reality."

Pearson and Rhode come near to a more orthodox Kleinian position in the third section of Part 3 of their article. They show finally that *Breathless*, like *Shoot the Pianist*, "no longer embodies a philosophy of discontinuity, but has become a film about a man (or woman) who suffers discontinuity and loss." But if this is correct, as I take it to be, then Pearson and Rhode should not conclude that the Cinema of Appearance is inadequate—only that its philosophy is inadequate.

Existentialist philosophy is often stated so that it sounds like a super-intellectual manic defence. Nevertheless one of the roots of existentialism has been the healthy realisation that traditional rules of morality do not match up to the complexity of man as he is today. In formal philosophising the existentialists have not made use of the discoveries of the linguistic school. Hence their central concepts remain ambiguous and are interpreted in different ways on different levels of consciousness. It is therefore not so surprising that a group of good artists should find existentialism a tenable and even fruitful philosophy.

Yours faithfully,
K. R. ADAMS

Birkbeck College,
Malet Street,
London, W.C.1.

Top Ten

MESSIEURS.—Je vous remercie d'avoir bien voulu passer ma réponse à votre questionnaire sur les dix meilleurs films du monde. Toutefois, j'ai cru relever une erreur qui vous a sans doute échappé. Vous attribuez, en effet, à Flaherty l'admirable *Tabou* de Murnau. Or cela modifie le sens de ma liste. Je ne mets réellement que trois cinéastes au dessus des autres: Mizoguchi, Lang et Murnau. Malgré l'estime que je porte à l'auteur de *Moana*, je n'aurais jamais eu l'audace de le placer si haut.

Dès lors, ne serait-ce point, Messieurs, trop abuser de votre obligeance que de vous demander un léger rectificatif?

En vous remerciant à l'avance, je vous prie de croire, Messieurs, à l'expression de mes meilleurs sentiments.

JEAN DOUCHET

Cahiers du Cinéma,
146 Champs-Élysées,
Paris VIII.

Tabou should of course have been attributed to both Murnau and Flaherty, and we apologise to M. Douchet. We also made an error in the Top Ten feature in describing Herr Enno Patalas as East German; he is in fact a West German writer and critic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UNITED ARTISTS for *The Diary of a Chambermaid*, *One, Two, Three*.
WARNER-PATHE for *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Summer and Smoke*.
M-G-M for *The Barkleys of Broadway*.
BRITISH LION for *Richard III*.
MIRACLE FILMS for *French Can-Can*.
MONDIAL FILMS for *Pickpocket*.
COMPTON-CAMEO for *Fires on the Plain*.
COMPTON/SEBRICON for *Lola*.
RANK FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *The White Nights*.
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Ugetsu Monogatari*, *The Lady with the Little Dog*.
FILMS DE FRANCE for *Orphée*.
LONDON SCHOOL OF FILM TECHNIQUE for *Roundabout*.
UNIFRANCE FILM for *Caporal Epingle*.
VILLANI FILM for *Cronaca di un Amore*.
LES FILMS RAOUL PLOQUIN for *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*.
LES FILMS DE LA PLEIADÉ for *Toute la Mémoire du Monde*.
PARIS FILM PRODUCTIONS/JOSEPH LOSEY for *Eva*.
EAST-HUNT ASSOCIATES/WALTER WANGER PICTURES INC. for *Cleopatra*.
SATYAJIT RAY PRODUCTIONS/MARIE SETON for *Kanchenjunga*.
ELY LANDAU/JOHN HILLELSON AGENCY for *Long Day's Journey into Night*.
JAMES WOLF PRODUCTIONS for *Term of Trial*.
SOVEXPORT for *Kolka, My Friend*.
MICHAEL CACOYANNIS for *Electra*.
JONAS MEKAS for *Sunday Junction*, *A la Mode*.
IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM for *Triumph of the Will*.
LA CINEMATHEQUE FRANCAISE for *La Nuit du Carrefour*, *La Bête Humaine*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Train arriving at a Station*, *L'Ange de Noël*, *Ménilmontant*, *Un Chien Andalou*.
FILMS OF POLAND for photographs of Polish Film School.
COMPAGNIE JEAN RENOIR for photograph of Jean Renoir.

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SOLE AGENTS for U.S.A.: Eastern News Distributors, 255 Seventh Avenue New York 1, N.Y.
PRINTED BY Brown Knight & Truscott Ltd., London, England.
BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick Ltd., London.
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES (4 issues), 18s. including postage.
U.S.A.: \$3.50. Price per copy in United States, 85 cents.
PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July and 1st October.
Overseas Editions: 12th of these months.

CONVERSATION WITH JEAN RENOIR

continued from page 83

inevitable. But it's absurd to suggest the New Wave doesn't represent the cinema of our time: of course it does. One can say that very good films are being made outside the New Wave, but these good films don't give cinematic expression to this world of 1962. In a few years there will be another movement, with another name, or no name, bringing something else with it: so much the better.

I read recently something you were reported as saying . . . I can't quote it exactly, but it seemed to me marvellous. You said something like this: "I'm not ashamed of changing my mind, at least I'm not afraid of setting out, looking for something, without knowing where I'm going . . ."

Well, what matters is the action, not the target. Of course one needs general ideas, but they must be so deep-rooted, so profound, that one hardly knows one has them. You have to start out in a certain direction, and keep to it, but in the way that migratory birds follow a line instinctively, without knowledge. I believe the artist ought to be like that. And then the conscious part of his mind goes into the detail, into action, into doing. An eighteenth or nineteenth century idea which has caused immense trouble is this one of targets. "Do this and you will be rewarded"; "work well and you will have money for your old age." It ought to be done for the pleasure of the moment, the pleasure of working well.

Finally, I'd like to ask whether you believe that there's a return at the moment towards individualism.

Towards individualism? Alas, yes, because we've had quite enough of individualism. The myth of the mass, the myth of the individual . . . I don't believe in them any more. People want to react against the crowd, and so they get the idea that when a young woman writes a book explaining how she makes love, the things that please her, this is exciting. Well, it doesn't excite me. I'm sure she's right to make love, but that's her affair, not mine . . . I believe in the individual, as I said at the beginning of this conversation, when he reflects the world and tries to explain it. I believe in the individual if he knows how to absorb. It's imagination that we ought to be afraid of.

Translated and edited from a tape-recorded interview.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

continued from page 70

funds. The most extravagantly endowed film school in the world, its annual cost must run well into seven figures. On the other hand, the outside estimate (Carl Foreman's) for the most ambitious scheme that might be idealised for this country would not be greater than £200,000 a year. It might be managed with less than half that sum—or, roughly, the amount of money that is allocated annually to the Children's Film Foundation. Not a major item in relation to Education Estimates, and a brass farthing in comparison to Defence Estimates (against which a national film school might, whimsically, be charged). As far as the film industry is concerned, it is not really a very large sum when set against the cost of an average major feature production, or against the Production Fund, or against the tax relief the Industry won a year or so ago by its plea for help in improving its own artistic well-being. And if the money helped to turn up a Truffaut or a Resnais or a Resnais once in a while, it would not be a bad investment.

Readers may be interested to know that from June 15-17 a festival devoted to the work of film schools will be taking place in Cambridge. The purpose, say the organisers, is "to introduce to the British public foreign films which are the products of forms of training very different from our own much criticised 'apprentice system'." Further details can be obtained from the Chairman, Anthony Thomas, at Queens' College, Cambridge.

A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

******ANNEE DERNIERE A MARIENBAD, L'** (*Compton-Cameo/Sebricon*) Resnais' and Robbe-Grillet's experiment with time and reality. Hauntingly beautiful, a masterpiece of applied technique, and not half as difficult as it has been made to sound. See it and make up your own mind. (Giorgio Albertazzi, Delphine Seyrig, Sacha Pitoëff. Dyaliscope.)

***DAY OF SIN, A** (*Compton-Cameo/Sebricon*) Via a bitter little anecdote, Moravia and Pasolini draw a tendentious contrast between the sweet life of the Roman rich and the misery of the tenement masses. Sex-harping blend of the sentimental and the harsh, artificially directed by Bolognini, badly cut about and dubbed. (Jean Sorel, Lea Massari, Jeanne Valérie.)

****DEVIL AND THE NUN, THE** (*Contemporary*) Wordy and rather ponderous theological conflict set in a bewitched nunnery, with acknowledgments to Dreyer and Bergman. Alternately gripping and pretentious, with a central performance by Lucyna Wynnica which has real theatrical force. (Mieczyslaw Voit; director, Jerzy Kawalerowicz.)

DEVIL NEVER SLEEPS, THE (*Fox*) On the theory that nothing succeeds like success, this adaptation from Pearl Buck appears to have armed itself with all the trumps—conflict between Church and politics, Far East setting with gallant Western priests and caricatured Communists, love and comedy as the umpires. Leo McCarey's direction droops under the tastelessness of it all. (William Holden, Clifton Webb, France Nuyen. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)

***EL CID** (*Rank*) Solemn pageant about the noble Spanish knight who united Moors and Christians under one king. A likeable cast struggles vainly with two-dimensional characters, and there is an arid hour or two between the film's highlight—a mounted, single-combat scene—and its final battle; but Anthony Mann's compositions are often pretty. (Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren, John Fraser. Technicolor, Super-Technirama 70.)

*****FIRES ON THE PLAIN** (*Compton-Cameo*) Ichikawa's true, amazingly controlled, almost apocalyptic story of a Japanese soldier vainly trying to survive amongst comrades reduced to cannibalism in the last days of the war. (Eiji Funakoshi.) *Reviewed.*

FLOWER DRUM SONG (*Rank*) Chinese "picture bride" from Hong Kong meets Chinese-American boy, but he loves Chinese-American nightclub stripper. Garish, mawkish reworking of a resistible Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. (Nancy Kwan, James Shigeta, Miyoshi Umeki; director, Henry Koster. Technicolor, Eastman Colour; Panavision.)

FOREVER MY LOVE (*Paramount*) Three Austrian films about "Sissi", the wife of the young Emperor Franz Joseph, parcelled up into an indigestible slab of fudge. Superb settings. (Romy Schneider, Karlheinz Böhm; director, Ernst Marischka. Agfacolor, Technicolor.)

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE, THE (*M-G-M*) Visually rich remake of the 1921 Ibañez-Rex Ingram-Valentino spectacle. Minnelli's mechanical direction and glassy performances by Glenn Ford and Ingrid Thulin don't help a love story absurdly updated to World War II. (Charles Boyer, Paul Lukas, Paul Henreid. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

HANDS OF ORLAC, THE (*BLC/British Lion/Britannia*) Pedestrian remake of Maurice Renard's lurid horror story, directed by Edmond T. Gréville out of that battered box of technical tricks he has been carrying around for 30 years now. (Mel Ferrer, Christopher Lee.)

HAPPY THIEVES, THE (*United Artists*) An untidy script and some ill-judged mournful undertones lower the otherwise genial temper of a farce about a trio of luckless, high-class crooks in Madrid. (Rita Hayworth, Rex Harrison, Joseph Wiseman, Alida Valli; director, George Marshall.)

***H.M.S. DEFIANT** (*BLC/Columbia*) Frank Tilsley's *Mutiny*, adapted with circumspection where the sadism is concerned, some irrelevant flag-wagging, and occasionally attentive period detail. (Alec Guinness, Dirk Bogarde, Anthony Quayle; director, Lewis Gilbert. Technicolor, CinemaScope.)

HONEYMOON (*BLC/British Lion*) Highly coloured tour round Spain interrupted by several awkward and fussy ballet items. Antonio's *zapateado* down a mountain road brings a breath of fresh air into a leaden "entertainment". (Anthony Steel, Ludmilla Tcherina; director, Michael Powell. Technicolor, Technirama.)

****INNOCENT SORCERERS** (*Contemporary*) Racy, intimate tale of two young would-be lovers, trapped in the course of a night by their own blasé defence mechanisms. Wajda has managed a sudden switch to gaiety with ease, but his underlying seriousness of purpose remains unimpaired. Excellent acting by Tadeusz Lomnicki, Krystyna Stypulkowska, Zbigniew Cybulski.

LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA (*M-G-M*) Should a harried American mother (Olivia de Havilland) permit her mentally retarded daughter (Yvette Mimieux) to marry a love-lorn young Italian (George Hamilton) without telling him all? Baffling attempt to turn a ticklish problem picture into a comforting magazine story-cum-travelogue. (Rossano Brazzi; director, Guy Green. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.) *Reviewed.*

***MAJORITY OF ONE, A** (*Warner-Pathé*) Leonard Spigelglass's stage success cosily translated into Technicolor with Alec Guinness as an improbable Japanese tycoon and Rosalind Russell as the Jewish momma from Brooklyn who captivates him. An old-fashioned treat for the over-forties. (Ray Danton, Madlyn Rhue; director, Mervyn LeRoy.)

MOON PILOT (*Disney*) Outer-space cutie meets reluctant space pilot in a limp farce-fantasy which never gets into comic orbit. Edmond O'Brien and Brian Keith overact engagingly. (Tom Tryon, Dany Saval; director, James Nielson. Technicolor.)

*****NOTTE, LA** (*United Artists*) Antonioni's most courageous and penetrating examination yet of the problems of love and marriage. In some ways, a return to the formal rigour of *Cronaca di un Amore*; in any case, a masterpiece. (Jeanne Moreau, Marcello Mastroianni, Monica Vitti.)

OPERATION SNATCH (*Regal International*) Terry-Thomas saves Gibraltar by ensuring the replenishment of its legendary colony of Barbary Apes. Flabby British wartime farce. (George Sanders, Lionel Jeffries; director, Robert Day.)

POSTMAN'S KNOCK (*M-G-M*) Lame comedy of errors about a rustic postman caught in the toils of city life. Spike Milligan is no Tati, but there are a couple of lively moments from Wilfrid Lawson and two mildly Goonish gags. (Barbara Shelley, John Wood, Miles Malleon; director, Robert Lynn.)

*****POSTO, IL** (*Contemporary*) Fresh as a draught of clear, cool Alpine air, this story of a boy who applies for a job in a big Milan firm is a model of loving and scrupulous observation. Marvellous handling of non-professional players; sad in its view of the circumscribed life of the bureaucrat; enchantingly funny and—for all that its scale is small—directed with real thought and precision. (Sandro Panzeri, Loredana Detto; director, Ermanno Olmi.)

****ROMAN SPRING OF MRS. STONE, THE** (*Warner-Pathé*) Rather ambiguous tragedy of a widowed actress, aged out of star rôles, devoured by Rome's grasping romance-merchants and her own insecurity. Colourful but hollow version of Tennessee Williams's 1937 novel, notable for Lotte Lenya's portrait of polite, aristocratic cunning concealing the coarse and sharklike ill-will of a fortune-hunting procuress. (Vivien Leigh, Warren Beatty; director, José Quintero. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

SERGEANTS 3 (*United Artists*) Sinatra Clan revels in Western guise, with carnage of Indians played for laughs and a Gunga Din act from Sammy Davis Jr. (Dean Martin, Peter Lawford; director, John Sturges. Technicolor, Panavision.)

SOUTH PACIFIC (*Fox*) High, wide and generally unhandsome version of the stage musical, stodgily directed by Joshua Logan. Happily the songs survive a welter of eccentric colour effects and jungle décor. (Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

***SUMMER AND SMOKE** (*Paramount*) Unintentionally penetrating study in arrested development. Tennessee Williams's passionate, fey, disarmingly naïve discussion on sex and the soul is given an intensity it barely deserves by Geraldine Page's performance as the introspective spinster on the road to degradation. (Laurence Harvey, Una Merkel; director, Peter Glenville. Technicolor, Panavision.) *Reviewed.*

***THOU SHALT NOT KILL** (*Gala*) The problem of conscientious objection in France is presented by Autant-Lara with the maximum of goodwill, but little filmic grace. Three overstressed leading performances and a ragged Yugoslav supporting cast don't help matters. (Laurent Terzieff, Horst Frank, Suzanne Flon. CinemaScope.)

***THUNDER OF DRUMS, A** (*M-G-M*) Vernacular, detailed yet oddly perfunctory attempt to invade Ford's territory of the Apache-jammed 1870 frontier. The story, an honourable if dull account of the making of a man and a soldier chafing under the command of a grizzled veteran, is further hampered by a laborious love angle. (Richard Boone, George Hamilton; director, Joseph Newman. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

TWICE ROUND THE DAFFODILS (*Anglo Amalgamated*) High jinks and low depressions in a TB sanatorium, happily staffed by a comely chorus-line of nurses. Produced, with surprising warmth, by the *Carry On* team. (Juliet Mills, Donald Sinden, Donald Houston; director, Gerald Thomas.)

******UGETSU MONOGATARI** (*Contemporary*) The adventures of a potter, his wife, and a ghost princess during a civil war in the 16th century. The late and great Kenji Mizoguchi triumphantly creates and exquisitely composes a half-real, half-legendary world of rich, barbaric power. (Machiko Kyo, Mitsuko Mito, Kinuyo Tanaka.) *Reviewed.*

***VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, A** (*Paramount*) In this uneasy co-production by Paul Graetz, Arthur Miller's attempt to find Greek tragedy on the Brooklyn waterfront makes rather less sense than in the original. Sidney Lumet fails to bring the *milieu* to life, and only Maureen Stapleton and Raymond Pellegrin manage to create flesh and blood. (Raf Vallone, Jean Sorel.) *Reviewed.*

VILLAGE OF DAUGHTERS (*M-G-M*) Clottish English travelling salesman is appointed Cupid by Italian villagers. Another British comedy; Eric Sykes gets the treatment this time. (Scilla Gabel, Gregoire Aslan; director, George Pollock.)

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE (*BLC/Columbia*) Idiotic story of a New Orleans brothel and of the love of the madame (Barbara Stanwyck) for one of the girls. Directed (by Edward Dmytryk), written and played as if all concerned were walking through quicksands. (Capucine, Laurence Harvey, Jane Fonda.)

****WEST SIDE STORY** (*United Artists*) Strikingly mounted version of the Broadway musical which fails to bridge the gap between realistic backgrounds and Hollywoodian social rage, between dramatic dancing and tired echoes of Romeo and Juliet, between—in fact—theme and form. Fine playing by George Chakiris, Richard Beymer and Rita Moreno, but some of the others are disappointing. (Natalie Wood, Russ Tamblyn; directors, Robert Wise, Jerome Robbins. Technicolor, Panavision 70.) *Reviewed.*

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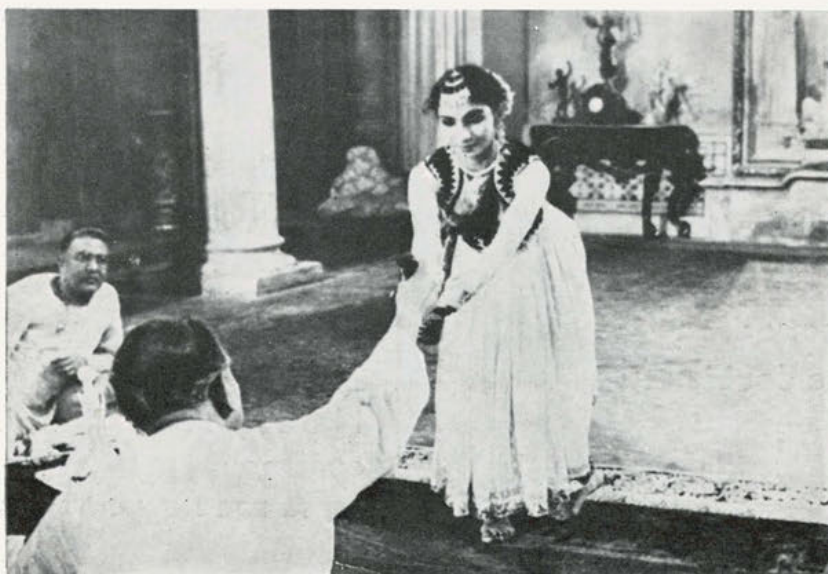
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